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THE
BLACK
SHIP

By John S. Warner.

CHAPTER I.

PREMONITORY TO COMING EVENTS.

The sea yawned around her like a hell,
And down she sucked with her the whirling wave
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he dies.
And first one universal shriek there rushed,
Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hushed,
Save the wild wind and the remorseless clash
Of billows.—BYRON.

"MAY God have mercy on us! The vessel will
not float one-half hour longer, and our boats are all
stove."

The last vestige of hope has fled. The dark-wing-
ed presence of death was hovering over that doomed
vessel, as her captain uttered the words which
seemed wrung from his heart. They were addressed
to a young girl, in the prime of early womanhood,
who stood shivering with fear by his side. Her
sweet face was overshadowed with the fearful peril



THE BLACK SHIP.

of the moment, and her beauty was enhanced by the abundant tresses which had burst from their confinement, and now streamed in pretty disorder around her face. The angry waters of the ocean roared and seethed around—their summits wreathed in foam, their spray rising and striking the face with stinging violence as they jostled and smote against each other. The heavens were overspread with a rayless gloom, and the vast gray clouds rolled, volume after volume, out from the depths of their boundless home. The wind blew with terrific violence, now sobbing and sighing, or whistling with a shrill voice through the rigging, as if the demons of air were contending, with horrid shrieks, for the mastery. The masts creaked and groaned, their spear-like tops whipping and swaying against the inky sky, threatening to go by the board at any moment. The vessel groaned and strained heavily at every fresh sea that struck and threatened to engulf her, while the pumps, although kept constantly at work by the frenzied exertions of the men, showed plainly the rapid increase of the water.

A few short weeks previous, a merry party were gathered at the aristocratic mansion of a wealthy gentleman in England. It was on the occasion of the departure for America of Mr. Snowden, in company with his sister, Mrs. Bryce, and her daughter, Clara. Little did they then think, when the cheerful faces and merry voices of friends wished them a safe and pleasant voyage, of the fearful perils which so soon would encompass them!

"Have we no hope left—no chance of life to which we can cling?" asked Clara, in tones that went to the captain's heart.

"No, young lady. I have done all that lays within the power of mortal man, but all in vain. We will soon meet again before our Maker," was his sad response.

"Oh, is our end so near—is death so inevitable?"

She dropped her head upon her breast a moment, then raising it, glanced upward, while her lips moved in silent prayer, and her hands, meekly folded upon her breast, gave her the semblance of one of those saint-like appearances we ascribe to the beings of another world.

The captain had, in the mean time, motioned his first officer to him and given some order, which the mate hastened to perform.

"I have just ordered Mr. Grey to fire our gun as a signal of distress," he said, again addressing Clara; "but it seems almost useless, for I doubt if the gun can be heard any great distance from the ship."

"The report of a cannon penetrates further than we would believe, and it may attract the notice of some vessel that may chance to be near," she replied, a slight shade of hope lighting somewhat the gloom of her countenance.

"I hope it may. As you say, a vessel may be near; but from the manner in which the sea is agitated, doubtless would pass us unnoticed. Oh, there it goes."

A bright flash leaped from the muzzle, and the loud report boomed over the waters, of "the minute-gun at sea."

At a distance of not more than two miles from where they floated, lay a British man-of-war, which had not noticed the proximity of the merchant-vessel on account of the roughness of the sea. The attention all were obliged to give to the safety of their own ship, also, had rendered the officers unobservant. She was a stanch craft, and, unlike the merchantman, was under as much canvas as prudence and her successful management would permit. It was evident her commander was a prudent man, for the gale had not caught him "on the wrong tack." He was standing aft, surrounded by officers, narrowly watching sea and ship and at times issuing such orders as experience told him were best. Lieutenant Harold Merton—for so he was named—was a young man of commanding appearance. His face wore that frank expression so pleasing to contemplate, but his thoughtful eye flashed with an occasional glance which betrayed a quick but generous temper. He was scarce twenty-six years of age, yet, by his untiring exertions, and in the successful accomplishment of numerous duties that had been assigned him, he had risen quickly in favor and station.

"A rough day, this, Mr. Merton, for a vessel to be caught unprepared," remarked one of his companions.

"It is, sir, and many a one. I fear, will seek the depths of ocean before the wind lulls. I pity poor Jack, with his few inches of wood between him and eternity," replied the lieutenant, without once looking at the person addressed, but prudently fixing his gaze either on the vessel or to windward.

"You speak, sir, as if we were not tied up in the same bundle."

"Our situation is one of comparative safety to that of many others who are out at this moment. But the wind freshens, I think. See that an extra reef is taken in that foretopsail, and in with the mizzen-topsail."

"A hard time for reefing, sir, but it shall be done," and he hastened to have the order executed.

The order had been obeyed, and the privileged few again were assembled within the sacred confines of the quarter-deck.

"It is singular that we have not passed a ship or vessel of any kind to-day, lying as we do, in their direct course to and from the American ports," was at length remarked.

"We have, without doubt," replied the commander; "but we would be obliged to almost run them down before we could see them."

At this moment the faint booming of the cannon met their ears.

"Hush! did you hear that?"

"I did. Did you mark the direction?"

"No, sir, but we may hear it again."

"True, for I suspect it to be the minute-gun of some ship in distress. Hal there it is again!"

"From the north and westward of us, sir, and some distance off."

"We will be sure by waiting once again for the sound."

"Your intention is to go to their relief?"

"Most certainly I shall, if I can work up to them."

"It will be a difficult, and perhaps a dangerous undertaking."

"And yet I shall attempt it, were the shadow of death to stand in my way. Do you think it becoming the dignity of an officer of his Majesty's service, even to entertain the thought of leaving a suffering fellow-being, when his efforts might snatch him from a watery grave? But this is no time for words," he added, as the distant report again came wafted to them on the wind. "Get your vessel ready for stays. I shall put about, if it is possible, against this heavy sea."

The wind now was blowing a terrific gale, and the relative positions of the two vessels were entirely different. The merchantman was drifting before the wind, and not a sail set, her bowsprit badly sprung, and her main and mizzen-mast threatening to go over at any moment. He was, in fact, in a hopeless condition. The vessel-of-war had her head pointed into the very jaws of the wind, and although very little onward progress was made, she yet was enabled to hold her own, and to successfully battle against the wall of waters that essayed to check her progress. When the first report of the gun had reached the lieutenant's ear, it came from the northwest, but, as each succeeding discharge grew fainter, it convinced him that they who fired it were passing to the east.

With great difficulty and nice seamanship, the head of the vessel was brought on the other tack, and swiftly sped on its errand of mercy. It required but the lapse of a short space of time ere the sinking ship hove in sight. On her deck could be seen her crew. They had left the pumps, knowing as they did, that death was inevitable; and the torture of mind under which they suffered made them wish the end to come quickly. The appearance of the strange sail, however, inspired them with renewed hope, and with frantic gestures they besought their deliverers to make all haste to reach them.

"Lower away the quarter-boat," shouted Merton, "and follow me, my men!"

It would have seemed a matter of impossibility for a boat to live for one moment in such a sea, but the noble heart that issued the order, and those brave fellows that obeyed, thought not of danger. Before them were fellow-beings hovering on the brink of eternity, and to save them, even though they lost their own lives in the attempt, was the determination of all. Providence watched over that frail craft; and, although it was buffeted hither and thither by the raging element, at one moment lifted high in air with a quick jerk, or lost to sight in the watery valley, it yet reached the stern of the ship. With superhuman efforts her crew succeeded in safely removing all the passengers from the vessel. To reach their own ship was now to be effected with much difficulty, but it was at last accomplished; and so completely were the boat's crew exhausted, that they were unable to return for the remainder. The boat, however, did not remain idle for want of hands. Forth came another knot of those lion-hearted followers of the sea, to take the place of their fatigued comrades; but, alas, their disinterested motives were of no avail; at the very moment they were about descending into the boat, they were checked by the sudden exclamation of their commander:

"Back on deck with you, my lads! for yonder vessel will go down before we can reach her, and it would but jeopardize our own lives to be near. God help them, for we can do no more."

As he spoke, all eyes were turned upon the hapless beings on the deck of the sinking ship. They had noticed that the men had been recalled from entering the boat, and the fearful truth burst upon them that their deliverers would but arrive too late to save them. With what stinging agony did they watch the arrival of the moment which was to mark their last on earth. Slowly but surely the noble fabric sunk. Up, up, and still higher, crept the angry waters. Now they were but a few inches below her decks—now just even with them—and now, as if in pity for their sufferings, the ship gave one last life-like troll, and shot quickly from sight. One wild, agonizing cry, that rung out high above the wind, reached the ears of those who had so lately been saved, ere the waters engulfed them. The masts and spars quickly disappeared, one rapidly following the other, dragged down by the huge hull. The ship had sunk from sight forever.

A shiver ran through the hearts of those who had witnessed this tragedy, and the gasp of horror that escaped their lips indicated how strongly they felt for the hapless beings it had been beyond their power to save.

Unnoticed and unheeded by Lieutenant Merton had Mr. Snowden and the ladies descended to the cabin, the latter giving way, as they reached it, to their hitherto controlled and overwrought feelings in a flood of weeping. It was some time before their commander could restore the crew to their wonted cheerfulness and discipline, so strongly had those rough though tender-hearted men been impressed with the fearful sight, and hours had passed before he was reminded to look to the personal comfort of those he had saved. Descending to the cabin, he asked pardon for his seeming neglect, and explained the cause of his detention.

"Do not speak of neglect, sir, to those whom you have already laid under such a weight of obligation.

Rest assured you have our lasting gratitude for the service you have rendered us," said Mr. Snowden, extending his hand to the young man, while a tear of genuine feeling stood in his eye.

"You will refrain from mentioning it," replied Merton, bowing politely.

"True," quickly answered Mrs. Bryce. "It is one of those occurrences in life, sometimes met with, when words are inadequate to express the joy, thanks and indebtedness we feel to the one who has been instrumental in producing them."

"And one," said Merton, with much earnestness, "from which the sweets are robbed by the very thanks uttered by those who have received the benefit. With me, conscience gives all the reward required, and by pleasing that little monitor I feel amply repaid."

"And yet, sir, it would seem very strange did we allow our sentiments to remain unspoken."

"I hope you have experienced no injurious effects from the excitement your fearful peril produced?"

"For myself, I can assure you, none; but my daughter is of a more nervous temperament, and I fear for her. How do you now feel, Clara?"

The young lady replied that she was extremely weak, but echoed her mother's thanks for their preservation.

"We have been conversing some time *incog.*, as it were, and I think would feel more at ease could we call each other by name. Permit me to introduce my sister, Mrs. Bryce, and Miss Bryce, my niece. My name is Snowden," said that gentleman.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance," replied Merton, bowing, and, as he fixed an admiring glance on Clara, added: "and sincerely hope, sir, that our intercourse may be, by no means, a transient one. I am Lieutenant Harold Merton, of his Majesty's service."

The young man then inquired as to the port they wished to reach. Finding it beyond his power to touch there his own vessel, he laid his course in a direction where he would be likely to fall in with some trading or merchant-ship, and to it to resign his charge. During the period the young man and maiden were thrown together, the feeling of admiration on his part, and that of gratitude on hers had increased to one of sincere affection; and though, when the moment of parting arrived, nothing had passed between them, the following summer found Merton a visitor at Mr. Snowden's house. When the parting came, it found our youthful couple affianced, with the hearty approval of both uncle and mother.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACK SHIP AND THE GEORGIA HARBOR.

On the north part of the coast of Georgia, where the Medway empties its waters into the sea, extends a cape, or more properly a headland, the base of whose rocky sides is washed by the Atlantic Ocean. Some little distance further out lay a small island, which afforded an excellent harbor, safe and well hidden from sight. The entrance of it, however, was lined with sunken reefs and shoals, which required the bold seaman who essayed to enter its protection thoroughly to understand his business, and know where were the hidden dangers.

It was in the month of May, 1776, some two years after the events narrated in the previous pages, that the two men were seated on this headland, addressing each other at times in earnest conversation, or else gazing out upon the broad expanse of waters. They were dressed in loose-fitting roundabout-jackets, and wide pants of blue cloth; the collars of their coarse, strong shirts, of the same material, were turned down, exhibiting their muscular necks. On their heads rested jauntily circular caps devoid of all brim, and surmounted on top by a knot of black ribbon. The hard, weather-beaten lines, together with the dark brown hue of the skin, plainly denoted their calling, showing they had oft "battled with the breeze." In appearance they were strikingly different, as they were in nationality.

James Conway—as the name would indicate—was by birth an Irishman, possessed of quickness of temper and generosity of nature. He was a tall, powerful man, of dark complexion and raven hair, with an eye deep-set and at times fierce in its expression; in fact, he was one to be cherished as a friend, but dreaded as an enemy.

His companion was not so tall, yet more compactly made, his broad shoulders and expansive chest denoting great strength. Unlike the other, he was fair-haired; his eye, of a bright blue, was mild in its glance, yet there was a "beware" expression, if we may be allowed the term, about the general outline of his countenance which would cause the same feeling of respect, on the ground of a man to be feared, as that of his comrade. He answered to the single name of Ronald, and had first seen the light of day among the frowning highlands of Scotland.

"It's a lang time we ha' to bide for the Black Ship Jamie, and maybe she will na more be seen by either o' our ainsells."

"By me faith, but you're right, Ronald, for what between storms and the enemy's ships, she may be snug enough, faith, at the bottom of the sea."

"I ha'e na fear o' the ship she meets, for it mun be a gude one that would sink her."

"Well, be it as it may, I wish she'd heave in sight, for this isn't the best country on top of the earth for a man to be in. I tell ye what it is, man, give me old Ireland before all, and America next."

"And wad ye leave Scotland out in the cauld altogether, Jamie?" asked the Scotchman, resenting what he conceived to be a slight upon his country.

"Not I, Ronald; but we all have a land we like best, and mine is Ireland. It is hard traveling in your country; and, by me word, but you should be big-legged when ye have so much to do in the way of climbing."

"But we ha'e a fine fresh breeze, laddie, when we reach the craig, and it makes a man bould and burlie to snuff the keen air o' the hielands."

"Well, faith, they are both good countries," replied the Irishman; and then suddenly changing the subject, for he well knew his companion would talk forever in praise of his native land, he asked: "Did ye see the lady yesterday?"

"Na, Jamie, I did na; but I did the day afore. I tell thee they're a' gude followers of the king in that house, and we maun be careful what we say or do, else they'll find us out."

"By the sweet land we're on, Ronald, but it would be ill for them to try and dog our footsteps, and blood might be spilt before it ended," replied his companion, his eyes sparkling, and the hot blood mounting to his face.

"'Twould be an awsome day for them did they try it, an' we could play deil-gad o'er Jock Webster with them, but I would na let it make me angry till the time cam," replied the more cautious Scotchman.

"But do you know for what the ship wants to stop on this shore at all?"

Ronald was about replying, when a rustling in the shrubbery to the left attracted their attention. A man soon emerged and approached.

"Good-day to you," he said, in a gruff voice, and in a manner that struck both pleasantly.

"And a good-day to you," replied Ronald.

"Belong about here?" was the next question.

"Don't you see we don't by the cut of our jib?" replied Conway, curtly.

"I see you are a seaman."

"Yes."

"And to what ship do you belong?"

The Irishman was about to give her name, for he was proud of his vessel, and of the few brilliant deeds she had achieved since the commencement of the Revolution, when a sharp pinch from Ronald warned him to silence, and he allowed his companion to act as spokesman to all the questions which followed.

"To the first one that may cam."

"This is a hard shore to expect a ship to stop at, and unless you expect one, I would advise you to seek some port either north or south of this."

"It would na do for us," replied Ronald, briefly.

The reply indicated some hidden meaning, which was thrown out so as to discover, if possible, with which one of the parties of the day the stranger sided.

"And why not for you?"

"Because a mon now-a-day can na tell where he will meet a friend or foe."

"But if you are loyal to America why need you fear?"

"I was na born here, as ye ken frae my speech."

"Yet, for all that, your sympathies may be with the Colonies."

"And I might na," again answered Ronald, slowly, yet more directly than was his previous answer.

"Perhaps there are many others about this country that would answer as you have," replied the new-comer, in a tone so low that Conway failed to hear it.

"I was born under the ould flag, and why should I want to leave it?"

"Spoken like a man," said his questioner, now firmly believing the Scotchman and his companion were warm friends of the king. "If you will keep hid where you are a few days, I will try and place you beyond harm's way."

As he finished speaking, he bade them good-day, promising to see them again, and was soon out of sight. Both men indulged in a hearty laugh, while Ronald remarked:

"I tell thee, Jamie, yon chap thought he would blaw in my lug, and I take it a' for truth, but ye munna believe a mon frae what he says."

Little did the two seamen know the true purpose of the man's visit. Had they, blood assuredly would have been spilt. Mr. Snowden, who resided but a short distance from where they were, had noticed two men prowling in the neighborhood of his house. Being a staunch Tory, he had hired the man we have introduced, together with a sufficient force, to go in quest of them. If they proved, as he suspected, friends to the States and enemies of the king, they were to be arrested. Should resistance be offered, they were to be summarily disposed of, yet in so careful a manner as not to arouse the loyal men of America who lived in the vicinity.

"I would like to know whether there's been any fighting on land yet," remarked Conway, after he had been gazing out on the ocean for some time.

"Ye may believe there has, laddie, for ye dinna think that two armies would na meet, being sa close to each other for sa lang a time."

"Faith, an' you're right, Ronald, and there's man a dead and wounded man by this time north. But take a look yonder, at that speck, fer it looks like a sail."

"It's a sail," replied the Scotchman, after gazing some time, "and belike it may be the Black Ship."

"I only hope you're right, and that once more I may feel a ship's deck under my feet. Faith, it's hard for a sailor to be kept so long on land."

"Ye ha'e the signal ready?"

"Yes."

"And would na it be weel to take a walk among the trees, afore the ship lifts, for you chap may be watching?"

"In faith, but it would, Ronald; do you bide here while I go."

"Ye ha' better let me."

"No, no; you stay and watch the ship."

The wind was blowing fresh, and the vessel was not long in coming near enough for the Scotchman to identify it as his own vessel. Conway returning,

reported no one in sight. Both proceeded to the further extremity of the cliff, and made all ready to signal the vessel.

The ship referred to, which bore the singular title of the Black Ship, was an American cruiser, fitted up for the purpose of preying upon the enemy's commerce. She could not, however, be strictly called a privateer, as she was directly under the command of the Continental Congress, and was used partly in carrying orders, or to operate directly against any of the larger war-vessels of the enemy that, from time to time, might become unusually troublesome. She had been fitted up under the immediate supervision of her present commander, and was as staunch a craft, if not as large, as any then floating in the American waters. Her name was, evidently, given her in harmony with her color, which was of the deepest black—not confined to hull alone, but every mast, spar, and block was painted of like somber hue, and, although in itself gloomy, formed, in contrast to her snowy sails, a pleasing and striking appearance. The model of her hull was of marked beauty and strength, while her long, rakish masts, her thin, tapering spars, and the snowy appearance of her sails, made her a worthy specimen of the masterly skill of her builders. Not a rope but was neatly coiled away, and her brass shone like gold. Her decks were as clean as brush could make them, and her crew seemed to emulate the ship's example, in their unusually neat and tidy appearance. Her commander, Captain Monmouth, was a man in the prime of life, and well known as one of the strictest disciplinarians then in the American service. He was stern in manner, quick of comprehension, and untiring in his exertions against the vessels of the enemy. There was a cloud of mystery connected with his history, of which he never spoke, even to those who were most intimate with him. It was hinted that he had robbed his ship in darkness so as to be in unison with the thoughts that never allowed him to smile. One of his officers was the lieutenant through whose instrumentality our shipwrecked party had been saved from the wreck. When the first symptoms of the trouble between England and her colonies agitated the public mind of the mother country, Merton always had sided with the latter in the many arguments which had been held on board the vessel he commanded or among his associates on shore. At last, so zealous did he become that he was called the "loyal rebel." This title, although playfully given, made an impression on the young man's mind, until, at length, without giving any reason for the act, he threw up his commission, embarked for the western world, and, offering his sword to the new country of his adoption, was appointed second officer on board the famous Black Ship of the Republic.

"How long is it, Mr. Merton, since you left Ronald and Conway to find their way to this part of the coast?" asked his commander, as they rapidly neared the shore.

"Somewhat over six weeks, sir."

"You have arranged with them as to the signals to be used?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"This is somewhat an encroachment upon my orders, and a deviation from my own law; but as you, Merton, have been of great value to me, I am willing to do you all the favor that lies in my power."

"I am truly grateful, sir, for your kindness, and trust I may some day be able to recompense you."

"You will oblige me by not mentioning it; and now, as you understand the code of signals arranged between you and Ronald, I shall leave you to bring the ship safely to her anchorage."

Merton bowed his reply, and going forward, ordered, as soon as they were near enough, some powder flashed in a pan. As soon as the wreath of white smoke had passed to leeward, he raised his glass. After running it up and down the shore for some time, he finally noticed a small white flag fluttering on a point of the headland. He instantly notified the captain of the fact.

"Do you think the harbor will be a safe one?" asked the captain.

"I do, sir."

"I also mean whether we will be safe from the notice of any war-vessel of the enemy that may pass?"

"We will, sir, be completely hidden—partly by the point of the cliff, and partly by that island. Besides, no vessel can enter without the aid of a pilot."

"Then how are we to arrive at our moorings?"

"The seaman will inform me by signals how to avoid the sunken rocks and bars. How would you wish the vessel to lay?"

"What kind of a roadstead will we have?"

"I can hardly say, sir, what name would be proper. It can be called a tide-way, for the ebb and flood of the river affect it somewhat, and it can hardly be called an open roadstead."

"Anchor, then, Mr. Merton, with an open hawse, and to seaward. If we find that will not answer, we can readily change, and lay the anchor for the flood and ebb, up and down, in the direction of the flow."

"How long shall you lay here, sir?"

"I shall probably remain some days, now that I do come to anchor; and, as the vessel would look all the better for a little cleaning, you will see all in readiness to commence when we moor."

The officer instantly gave the necessary directions. The men were at once set to work scrubbing and cleaning the paint-work, especially under the bows and chains. The studding-sail booms were sent on deck, and, after being lightly planed, were set up and painted. Chafed places on the boats, lower

booms, masts, fly-blocks, rigging, etc., were blacked. Ladders and ladders got ready, and, as they were in a fine latitude, and would be in smooth water, preparations were first made to clean the ship's sides, and paint them down as far as it was found necessary. The decks were holystoned, together with the accommodation ladder, and put in order; topgallant masts fresh stayed, and the squaring marks of lifts, braces and buntlines looked to; hanging mats were taken down, and up went harbor gaskets; the tacks and sheets were singled; spans of topsail buntlines taken off; in fact, all made ready to bring the ship into the quiet harbor they were heading for with as neat, clean and seamanlike a manner as if they were entering the crowded port of some large city. It was by thus constantly exercising his crew, whenever the opportunity offered, that Captain Monmouth was enabled to preserve the neat appearance his vessel wore, and the strict discipline his crew were under.

By this time they had rapidly neared the shore, and the order was given to have the lighter sails taken in. The captain sat with his glass to his eye, ready to inform his officer of the signals that would be made, while Merton stood by the man in charge of the helm to give the necessary directions.

"Ronald shows a black signal, Mr. Merton," at length remarked the captain.

"Let her fall off a little—steady—so."

"He now shows white over black," was said, after they had stood on for some time in the direction taken.

"Lee braces—brace up sharp. Keep her as close as she will fill. Stand by to obey orders promptly, lads, for we must obey yonder signals as rapidly as they are given."

The two sailors under whose guidance the ship was now carefully winding its way among the many hidden dangers that surrounded her, had been left some time previous at a northern port, to make their way to the spot they were now at, and find out the channel to the entrance of the little harbor. They were ordered to obtain an interview with Miss Bryce, if possible, and mention to her the intended visit of the lieutenant, and, if it lay in her power, she was to aid them. On her uncle's plantation lived an aged negro who had spent most of his younger days in fishing; consequently, that part of the shore was familiar to him. Clara had secured his services, and from him Ronald had learned how to signal the ship so as to avoid the rocks and shallow waters of the inlet. Being informed some time previous of the change in the young man's politics, she was much opposed to the intended visit, not that she did not long to be clasped once more in his loving embrace, but, knowing well how bitterly her uncle would feel toward him, and also Merton's quick temper, which would not brook insult, she feared that unpleasant consequences might ensue. Hearing from Ronald that it was too late to prevent the meeting, she had advised the lieutenant not to attempt a secret one, but boldly to enter the house, let the results be as they would.

"They have changed signals to red," remarked the captain.

The ship was again allowed to fall away from the wind, until she was running directly before it. The signal was shown a moment, and then withdrawn from sight. This was repeated several times, when, in obedience to it, the vessel was put on her starboard tack.

"A crooked piece of water this, Mr. Merton; and if a ship should chance to see us she would be apt to knock a hole in her bottom before she could reach us. Ronald has now hoisted white over red, and the upper color is now being waved."

"Which means wear ship, and to do it without loss of time."

Merton's orders were at once given with promptness. The ship, as mentioned, was sailing on her starboard tack. To deaden her way she was thrown up in the wind, as the intention was to wear short round, her mainsail hauled up, and her spanker brailled up. The head-yards were braced a-box, and the after-yards squared. When the ship had gathered stern-way the helm was put a-port, amidships: when she lost it, and as the after-sails filled, and she gathered headway, the order rung out:

"Starboard your helm—square the head-yards."

Then, as the wind came round on the port quarter: "Heave up the after-yards—haul out the spanker, and board the main-tack."

Thus, as from time to time the signals were changed, so was the direction of the vessel regulated. At times she would be on her port or starboard tack, or else come up in the wind, shooting onward with the force given her by the wind's impulse, while the sails were full. While headway enough continued, so that she would yield obedience to her helm, she would gracefully fall away, her yards hauled and sails filled, every moment increasing "the bone in her teeth."

"I see now, Mr. Merton, white, black, and white over."

"We have then reached our ground, sir."

"I am glad to hear it. Lose no time in anchoring."

As they reached their position, the weather-anchor was let go, when veering away. They stood on till far enough, when the topsails were clewed up, and her other anchor let go while sheer enough was given her over the right way, that the cable should not cross. The precaution was taken to hold on till they hove in, to avoid fouling the anchor. The sails were then furled, and all made snug.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING OF FRIENDS AND FOES.

At the time the Black Ship was making her way into the little harbor, a merry party was gathered

at the house of Mr. Snowden. The arrival of two British officers with their attendants had caused the usual quiet of the place to be disturbed; all now was life and animation. Their presence at his house was kept secret as possible, for the entire country was aroused, and Mr. Snowden was fearful his guests might be attacked were it generally known who they were. The anxiety felt by Clara was intense. She knew that Merton was likely to call at any moment, and did he encounter the officers a disturbance was sure to arise. Hastily summoning the negro man already mentioned, she gave him a note, with directions where to find the two seamen, and bade him tell them to present it to the lieutenant as soon as he arrived. This he succeeded in doing at the time they were signaling the ship; and, as soon as Merton had landed, it was handed to him.

It was early in the afternoon of the following day, and the family had assembled in the parlor. The younger of the two officers, evidently, was much impressed with Clara's appearance; had she favored his advances, it was plain to be seen an affair of the heart might have followed.

"This is an awful and wicked rebellion, Miss Bryce," he remarked, drawing his chair by her side, and gazing with admiration on her beautiful countenance.

"War is an awful thing," she replied, somewhat evasively.

"War! It is unworthy of the name. You can not call a revolt from one of the most liberal of governments by such a misconstrued expression. Why, Miss Bryce, the honorable contest engaged in between two countries is, in itself, noble; but when a colony rises in arms against the country that has brought it into being and nurtured it into prosperity and strength, it is but a base return for it to strike at its benefactor in malice and bitterness."

"There may be a difference of opinion between individuals as to what is right and wrong, and in this instance there are two sides to the question," she replied, briefly.

"You surely do not favor the acts of these Colonies in the slightest degree?"

"I do somewhat."

"Miss Bryce, you astonish me."

"I should be pleased to know why?"

"From the fact of your being an Englishwoman."

"And does not America possess many warm friends in England, even among those high in office? You do not forget the venerable bishop of St. Asaph's, who uses such strong language against the system of taxation imposed upon the provincial government of America? His language was, as near as my memory serves me, as follows: 'Arbitrary taxation is plunder authorized by law—it is the essence and support of tyranny, and has done more mischief to mankind than those other three scourges from heaven—famine, pestilence and the sword.'"

"On my word, but you are a brave defender of the conduct of the States, and it stands me in hand to be guarded in my speech. You quote the bishop of St. Asaph's, but what of him? He was but a single man, and his a single opinion. 'Tis true this country has many defenders of its infamous course, but show me a system however bad, or a man however vile, that has not some few friends. No, Miss Bryce, the land of your adoption has done, and is doing, wrong; and it will require England as a dutiful mother to an undutiful child, to administer the chastisement so well merited, even though seas of blood may have to flow, and thousands of valuable lives be sacrificed."

"I have no fear for the result," was the quiet but firm reply.

"You think, then, England will fail to subdue this people?"

"I most certainly do, sir, and you will eventually see that I am right."

"But the Colonies can not hope to battle successfully against such superior odds."

"Their hopes are grown into a firm purpose. They will achieve independence."

"I regret we can not agree in our views. For myself, I have but a poor opinion of either Americans or their country."

This was said with that air of egotism and assurance which one vanquished in debate is ever apt to assume.

"I warn you not to carry that opinion into the battle-field, for it might cost you your life."

"How so?"

"Because the American is not apt to call up all his energies in operating against one he knows to be an inferior; but one such expression as that would render one rebel a match for thrice his number," she replied, pointedly.

"Let us change the subject, Miss Clara," said he, flushing at the implied sarcasm. Rallying again, he asked:

"I presume you have heard of the notorious vessel in the rebel service called the Black Ship?"

"I believe I have," She started slightly at the question.

"She has been extremely troublesome to our vessels, is very rapid in her movements, and audacious in her acts. She is a fit representative, in her color and recklessness, of the American cause. She is, I suppose, not unknown to you."

Clara felt her cheeks tingle at the insult so evidently implied, but she refrained from expressing her surprise and anger.

As if to render his words more painful and insulting, he added:

"I have heard of her second officer, a traitor to his country. He left the ship he commanded in his Majesty's service, to offer his sword to the rebel

Congress. I should like much to meet this fellow and cross swords with him, for the honor of St. George."

"The opportunity is offered sooner, perhaps, than the valiant gentleman would wish," exclaimed a deep voice at the door.

Clara uttered a low scream, as the manly form of Harold Merton stepped forward to confront the officer. Standing at the center of the room, dressed in the uniform of his calling, his cap in his right hand, while his left rested on the hilt of his weapon, his handsome face flushed with passion, his eye proudly returning the lowering glances of the two officers, he was the impersonation of a righteous Nemesis.

"Who are you?" inquired the officer addressed.

"Lieutenant Harold Merton, of the Black Ship of this Republic," was the proud reply.

This answer produced much sensation. Mr. Snowden, not aware that Harold had renounced the flag of St. George, nor that he had espoused the cause of the Colonies, was astounded at the sudden disclosure. Captain Moore, the elder of the two officers, as he heard the name and character of the young man, called an attendant, unnoticed, to his side. Hurriedly whispering a few words to him, the man left the room.

"Did I hear aright, Mr. Merton?" exclaimed Mr. Snowden, arising and approaching him. "Have you turned against your country?"

"I have cast my destinies with those of America. If that constitutes me a traitor, I most certainly am one, and, furthermore, am proud of the name."

"I could not have thought you capable of such language. The cause of this country is unjust; her name too darkened by her disloyalty to enlist the sympathy of an honorable man," was Snowden's insulting rejoinder.

"I have no quarrel with you, Mr. Snowden, but if you will be pleased to find a substitute in yonder braggart, I should like to make an arrangement on any terms he may propose."

"It would ill become a gentleman of England to sully his sword with the blood of such a fellow as you," replied Lieutenant Walton.

"Coward! Poltroon! Worthy slave of tyranny!" was Merton's ringing reply.

"You have uttered your death-warrant—draw!" shouted the officer, in a frenzy of passion.

"Not now," calmly replied Merton.

"Then you are the coward, and forget your boast. But 'tis what I might expect," replied Walton, scornfully.

"I forget nothing, sir—not even that there are ladies in the room," replied Merton, fixing his proud eye upon the officer.

"I am reminded, sir; thank you. But let us walk out, for there are some delightful spots of ground about this mansion," said Walton, snatching up his cap and striding toward the door.

"Which, perhaps, sir, will afford us as good footing as this parlor floor," added Harold, following the officer.

He had gone but a few paces, when a light yet firm hand was laid upon his arm. He turned, to meet the terrified look of Clara, who, unmindful of the presence of others, in imploring tones cried:

"Oh, Harold, do not go! For my sake, stop and think before you engage in deadly strife. What will it effect—what aid render to our country?"

"Will it not rid her of an enemy, and will I not chastise yonder fellow who calls himself an Englishman?"

"You forget. You might be killed. What, then, should I do?"

The tears streamed down her cheeks.

"It will be but the risk that surrounds every moment of my life. But I have little to fear in a contest with that creature."

"Harold, you must not, shall not go!"

"I am waiting impatiently for the test of your bravery!" called Walton, from the hall.

Merton started. In spite of the words and efforts of Clara he gently but firmly disengaged himself, and hastily imprinting a kiss on her forehead, started to overtake the lieutenant. Another adversary presented himself, however, in the person of Captain Moore, who, stepping before the young man, said:

"Perhaps, Miss Bryce, my persuasion may carry more weight with this headstrong man than yours."

Calling to his lieutenant to return, he continued:

"Lieutenant Merton, I arrest you for treason, in being found in arms against your king."

He essayed to lay his hand upon Merton's shoulder, but it was dashed away with much violence. Drawing his sword with one hand, he held a pistol in the other, while the expression of his countenance, as well as his menacing attitude, made the officer shrink away from him.

"I warn you all," he said, "if you value your lives, to beware how you attempt violence with me. I am, 'tis true, but one against three, but I am equal to you all!" He cast around him flashes of defiance and readiness.

"Harold Merton," said Mr. Snowden, approaching a few steps nearer the young man, and speaking with much feeling, "my family and myself can never forget that to you we owe our lives. I do not forget your bravery in rescuing us from the sinking ship, nor of the glorious service you were then in—that of the British navy. On your first visit to this house, you sought and obtained the hand of my niece, with the sanction of her mother and myself. Little did we then think you ever would deserve our censure, by proving recreant to your country or her interests. But, alas, to your everlasting shame and dishonor be it said, your own tongue has proclaimed your disloyalty. What assurance have we that you will prove true in all

things, when you are false in this? How are we to know but you may meet with some other fair face, whose tastes, form or features may be more to your liking, and that this poor girl may, at any moment, be cast aside in heartless disregard of all obligations? Return, Harold, to your allegiance, and all will then be well."

"Never!" was the short, stern reply. "I scorn alike your implications and your toriyism."

"Then yield yourself a prisoner to this officer of the king."

"Not while life remains, or this arm retains its strength."

"Then listen to me, sir, and mark well my words, for they shall be obeyed to the very letter. I here declare, in the presence of these witnesses, that the engagement hitherto existing between yourself and my niece is at an end, and never shall you be allowed to see her again."

"Are you more than man," replied Harold, with an air of hauteur, "that you think the power of controlling the destinies of two beings rests with your approval or disapproval? Mr. Snowden, you think to take advantage of me, because I am one among so many, and frighten me by threats, even by the mean, contemptible one you have employed, in annulling a life-contract made between Clara and myself, and which is beyond your power to control. Shall I show you, sir, how lightly we heed your command?" he asked. Turning to the young girl, he continued: "Clara, do you think I will ever prove recreant to our plighted vows? Answer boldly, dear girl."

"You never will be false to me, Harold," was her confident and unflinching reply.

"Then show the company, by placing your hand in mine, that the absolving will of Mr. Snowden can not sever us from the vows we have made."

Without a moment's hesitation she approached his side, and with the confidence ever existing in the heart of a true woman, placed her hand in his. Her uncle could not quietly behold this. Losing all self-command, he rushed toward the young man, followed by the lieutenant.

"Lose no time," he shouted, "but arrest at once this insolent traitor to his country, and the insulter of my house."

The upraised pistol and glittering sword, together with the stern voice of Merton, checked them. They stood transfixed beyond the reach of his arm.

"Once more I bid you beware, for unless I am driven to it in self-defense, I would not wish to shed blood in this room" or in the presence of these ladies. Give me uninterrupted passage from this house is all I demand. If you do not, I shall fight my way out."

"We consider you a prisoner, and consequently you can not have your request granted," replied Captain Moore, placing himself again in Merton's way.

"And as we are the strongest and can enforce our wishes," added Mr. Snowden, going to the captain's side, "your defiance is as foolish as it is reckless."

"We shall see who can boast of superior numbers. I did not wish to carry matters to this extreme, but you have driven me to it." Then raising his voice, he called: "Hither, my lads! This way, you sea-dogs!"

A heavy tramp was heard. The captain and Mr. Snowden were violently thrust aside, and Ronald and Conway strode into the room, to plant themselves by the side of their officer. This reinforcement was entirely unlooked for.

"Ye be in a tight place, sir, but ye ha'e but to gie the sign, and Jamie and I will make a clear path frae here to yonder door."

"Ay, ay, sir," continued Conway. "You have but to wink your eye but the smallest bit in the world, and we'll soon have you clear from these lubbers; or, if you'd like, Ronald and I'll jest make them fast in a running bowline, and take them along to the ship."

"We will do nothing yet, my men, if they let us depart quietly. Then turning to Captain Moore, he continued:

"You see I am not destitute of friends, and our numbers are now equal. Still, I am opposed to violent measures when they can be avoided. Will you now give me free passage?"

"Not quite yet, my young warrior," replied the Captain, sneeringly. "As you have brought reinforcements to the field, I will see what I can do in that line myself." Then raising his voice, he ordered: "Forward with you, men!"

The door in the rear of the room was thrown open, and fifteen British soldiers, with their gay uniforms and bright muskets, filed into the room, and drew up in line behind their officer. All turned their eyes upon Merton and his two sailors, expecting to see a look of blank hopelessness in their countenance, but what was their surprise to see their lips wreathed into a scornful smile. Merton, stepping to the center of the room, exclaimed, in a voice that showed the moment of action had arrived:

"Once, and once only, do I again ask: will you allow me to leave this room quietly?"

"Yes, but as our prisoner."

"That will never be."

"We shall see. Surround them, men."

"Back, every one of you, or your blood be upon your own heads!" shouted Merton, with a commanding wave of his hand. "Let this farce be ended, for I have wasted too much time already. Ronald, wind your call!"

The shrill sound of a boatswain's whistle penetrated to every part of the house, and the hoarse voice of Ronald calling the order of "Boarders away!" startled the astonished soldiers. The sound still rung out far and clear, when the tramp

of many hurried footsteps was heard. Soon in from the door, and climbing like so many monkeys in at the windows, appeared twenty stout fellows of the crew of the Black Ship.

"How think you, gentlemen?" asked Merton, proudly. "Have I not enough now at my back to successfully force my way? Think you yonder row of naked swords and pikes are lightly to be counted in a contest? I will not, however, for the sake of these ladies, as I have repeatedly said, use the advantage I now hold over you; and, also for their sakes, will forego the pleasure of taking you all prisoners, provided you offer no resistance to my leaving the house. If you do, I will give the order for my men to commence the bloody work."

Then turning to the sailors, he said:

"Away with you to the outside, my lads, but if you again hear Ronald's call, enter at once and do your duty. You understand what I mean."

"We are compelled by force of numbers to grant you your request, but perhaps the fortunes of war may again bring us in contact. If so, I shall hope to deal you the punishment you so richly merit," said the captain, angrily, at the same time motioning his men to leave the room.

"I shall only be too happy to meet you, sir, and perhaps may have the pleasure of showing you the internal structure of the Black Ship. But time flies, and I cannot longer stay to enjoy such agreeable company. I wish you good-day."

And bowing, he left the room, motioning Clara to follow.

Reaching the hall, he encountered Walton. Pausing, and fixing his keen eyes upon him, he said sternly:

"With you, sir, I have a matter to settle of no small moment, and shall endeavor to find you out at the earliest period that offers. Any man who makes threats or endeavors to defame another behind his back, is only worthy of the notice we give to dastards."

He waited not for reply, but taking Clara's hand, strode rapidly on, until they were hid from observation by the foliage. Here he paused, and drawing the agitated girl to his breast, said:

"I regret, dear girl, solely on your account, that my presence led to what has just transpired; but I could not avoid it, and surely, love, you do not blame me."

"Not in the least, dear Harold, although it may seriously affect your future," she replied, gauging up into his face with troubled eyes.

"True, Clara, it may render our meetings difficult, and perhaps at long intervals; but the end will be unalterably the same, if we but remain true to each other."

"I can readily answer for myself, and have all faith in you," he replied, a smile of love and confidence lighting up her sweet face.

"And well you may, dear Clara," he replied, earnestly. "You are not aware that I played eaves-dropper to your conversation with the officer?"

"I knew you must have heard something of what passed between us, or you would not have addressed Lieutenant Walton in the manner you did."

"I must now part with you, my dear one, for the news I shall bring Captain Monmouth will cause him to make sail at once."

"Stay but for a moment longer, Harold, for God only knows when we shall meet again, and I have something yet to say."

"You can feel no more reluctant at parting than I myself am, but recollect, dear girl, that my time is not my own. What you have to say, say briefly."

"First, Harold, do you think this country will achieve its independence?"

"Beyond a doubt, it will. Why?"

"Pardon me for not telling you at present," she replied. "What I wish to mention is, that my uncle told my mother some days ago, that it was not altogether safe for a man of his avowed principles to remain in this part of the country, and it was his intention to remove to New York."

"Will he take the entire family?"

"Yes."

"Then we may see each other sooner than I thought for."

"Your ship is, then, bound for that port?"

"I am given to understand so."

"You must not risk your life or liberty simply to gratify your desire to visit me; for remember they belong to your adopted country. Battle, dear Harold, bravely for the cause we have both so near at heart. Risk, if you will, all for her, but be not rash in placing yourself where the power of Captain Moore or Lieutenant Walton can reach you."

"Are they on their way North?"

"They go either to Boston or New York, as they shall receive orders."

"What method do they take to reach there?"

"A large British man-of-war is to stop on this coast for them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Merton, quickly, and slightly starting. "Then I must lose no more time, for the Black Ship does not lay in so safe a harbor as she might. When do they expect her?"

"Every day, at any hour."

"Then good-by, love, for this news is important, and I must communicate it without loss of time to my captain. May God bless and keep you Clara, till we meet again. There, there, be a good, brave woman; refrain from tears; our parting is but for a short time. Dear girl, farewell."

And with these last words, he hurried away, leaving his kiss warm on her trembling lips and pallid cheeks.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE AND THE YANKEE RUSE.

MERTON safely reached the vessel, and, without

loss of time, informed Captain Monmouth of what was impending. The danger attending them, did the man-of-war arrive while they were hid under the lee of the island, was by far more important than at first would be supposed. True, it was impossible for the enemy to reach them through the dangerous channel they had passed, and equally as impossible for them to leave while the man-of-war blockaded the entrance. The name, and, of course, the nationality of their ship would be soon known. With such a prize at hand, the English commander would not let the opportunity pass unimproved for attempting her destruction. This he could effect without much trouble, for, having open water, he could change his position at will, so that his cannonade could bear from any point he chose. Besides, he would, without doubt, send a land-party, who could open fire with light guns at easy range from the island, and to dislodge them would simply be impossible. Not a second was to be lost, since the unwelcome visitor might at any time arrive.

By this time it was nearly sundown. Preparations were made at once for starting, as it required all the remaining daylight to extricate themselves from their dangerous situation. One thing, from its singularity, is worthy of notice. Ronald and his companion had been shown the channel from shore by means of landmarks; consequently, to pilot the ship they must be on shore, or they would know no more of the channel than did the rest of the crew. A small boat was instantly at their service, in which they embarked. With long and powerful strokes they forced her through the water. As soon as they had landed and made signals, the anchor was got home, and the ship, with bows seaward, commenced threading her intricate way out.

They had arrived in deep water, and the boat was rapidly nearing them, when, suddenly, a cry rung out from the mast head:

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway?" called Captain Monmouth.

"Off our lee bow."

"What do you make her out?"

"It is too dark to see her plainly, sir; but it is a large ship."

"How does she head?"

"Right for here, sir."

"It is, no doubt, the very ship we wish to avoid, Mr. Merton," he remarked, turning to the young man.

"Without doubt it is, sir."

"Have they seen us yet?"

"I think they have, sir, for she comes on under full sail and has changed her course a point further south."

"Let me know if you see any thing unusual."

"Av, ay, sir."

"Will you fight her, sir?"

"No, for my orders are not to engage any vessel unless we are sure of obtaining an easy victory, and yonder stranger, I think, carries more weight than we."

"I think, with you, sir, it would be prudent to avoid her."

"If we can," quickly added the captain. "You see, Merton, she is heading directly across our track."

The Scotchman and Conway reached the deck. The former was sent aloft with a glass. No man of that crew could be better relied on for sharp observation and correct judgment. It had been some time since the ship's people had heard the roar of conflict. It could be seen plainly, from the eager looks that sat upon their countenances, that willing hearts and ready hands stood anxiously waiting the order to get to quarters. A short time elapsed before the voice of Ronald hailed the deck:

"It's a frigate, sir, and carries the flag o' England at her gaff."

"Is she much larger than we?" asked the captain.

"Almost half as big again, sir, and she's beating to quarters."

To corroborate the man's words, the sound of a drum reached their ears, and the flash of the battle-lantern could be plainly seen.

"Shall I beat to quarters, sir?" asked Merton.

"No, but let the men take their places without noise. We may have to receive one broadside, and, if we do, by the honor of my vessel, but they shall receive one in return," replied his superior, as his face grew as settled and firm in its expression as granite rock.

"Is it not remarkable they have discovered us so readily?"

"Not a whit, for this vessel is very generally known. Put the ship about, Mr. Merton."

The order was quickly given, and as quickly obeyed. Their course now lay, provided their enemy kept on her present course in a direction which would pass them astern. No sooner, however, had they gathered good headway, than the huge hull of their enemy swung up in the wind, and the two vessels were running parallel with each other.

Captain Monmouth saw, at once, that he had a wily foe to deal with. It would require his utmost tact to escape. Without waiting a moment to deliberate, he glanced first at the stranger and then aloft then ordered:

"Ready O! keep your ship full stays! Ease your helm down—*stady!* Haul over the boom—now down with your helm, *hard!* Helm a-lee! Let go fore and head sheets and overhaul! Raise tacks and sheets—keep fast the fore-tack—check the fore bowline! Let go the topgallant bowlines and shorten in the lee main tack! Haul well taut! mainsail haul! Fore-tack, head bowlines—off all, haul! Pipe-sweepers and hammock-stowers, Mr. Merton, and let me see those ropes coiled down properly."

The ship was now headed on her original tack,

By the quickness with which she had come about, much ground had been gained, yet care was taken that their course should not lay them under the sweep of their enemy's guns, which could not be brought to bear unless she either came up in the wind, or else fell away directly before it. After repeating this maneuver several times, he saw the required distance was gained; the moment had arrived, when, by a bold dash, he must effect his escape, or be sunk by the broadside of the frigate.

"Stand by your guns, my lads, and see to it you waste not a single pound of your iron," he said, as he ordered his vessel about for the last time.

On they dashed; a moment would suffice to cross the frigate's track, when she was seen to start up in the wind. The next instant a flame of fire belched from her huge sides, followed by the deafening roar of her cannon. The Black Ship's reply was almost instantaneous. Owing to the darkness that now surrounded them, the Briton's broadside did but little mischief, wounding two men, tearing some holes in the Yankee's sails, besides severing some of the less important ropes. The fire of the Black Ship was, however, much more effective, for, by the flash of the frigate's guns, they had been enabled to secure an accurate aim, and the sharp, agonizing cry, the tearing sound of wood, which they distinctly heard, told what havoc had been made.

Much as even Captain Monmouth wished to continue the firing which had commenced with such effect, prudence warned him to forbear. Consequently his ship held her course and soon was safe out upon the broad Atlantic.

His orders now compelled him to shape his course toward the coast of New Jersey, where it was expected an additional complement of men awaited him, together with orders which might assign him to dangerous work.

"Have ye learned any news, Ronald, from our lieutenant?" asked Conway the next day, as the two men lay lounging on the deck.

"Weel, I ha'e a sma' bit to tell ye."

"Let's have it, then, for, by me soul, it's a treat to git a bit o' news nowadays."

"Ye ken the British troops were whipped at Boston, dinna ye?"

"I heard so, but don't know how it was done; and if you do, suppose you give us a little history like of the affair."

"You see, first of all, Jam'e, they ha' quite a time over the flag we ha'e now hoisted at our peak. When Washington—bless him—first showed it, Howe thought we ha' submitted again to the crown, and they ha' a great time o' rejoicing; but, laddie, it ha' no sic meaning. The Yankees were amais't a' ready to attack the king's troops. They were na lang in seeing their mistake, for Washington fortified the Heights o' Dorchester, and opened fire frae Lochmere's Point and Plowed Hills. Ye ken well the place, I trow, Jamie."

"Faith do I, Ronald; but go on."

"Well, laddie, a little afore the firing began, they were ha'ing a gude time in the British camp, playing a farce ca'ed 'Boston blockaded,' and making a' the sport they could o' us Yankees. They ha' a mon dressed like Washington, wi' a auld wig on his head, and a rusty sword by his side. They were ha'ing their own sport, when in came a sergeant wi' the news that the Yankees were attacking Bunker Hill. At first they thought it were a' sham, and part o' the play, but burly Howe was soon shouting for his officers to gang to their places, and the people ran frightened away. I tell thee, Jamie, they ha' no time more for sic fun. I think it wa' on the fifth o' last March, and they say it wa' a mild, sunny day as iver shone this time o' year, when the British order'd twenty four hundred men to Castle William, so they could that night attack our men. It wa' not meant, Jamie, that the fight should be, for the wind began to blow, and the king's men could na land, so the order cam frae Howe the next day to get ready to leave Boston."

"And have they left?" inquired Conway.

"I ken they ha'e."

"Ships and all?"

"Ay, laddie."

"By me soul, but that's too bad. But where have they gone to?"

"I dinna ken, but we shall hear when we touch on the coast o' Jersey."

"Perhaps they have gone back to England."

"De'il the bit fear o' that; but Boston wa' too hot for them to bide a blink langer in."

"Then it's like we are to hunt them up, or cut in to some of their ships."

This remark of Conway, although spoken at random, actually was the truth; for on the ship's arriving at Barnegat Bay, the following communication was found awaiting her, together with the extra crew:

"TO CAPTAIN MONMOUTH, commanding the Continental Congress vessel-of-war known as the Black Ship:

"SIR:—Being aware of the impossibility of your obtaining any thing like a true estimate of the stirring events now taking place in the history of our common country, we briefly mention, in connection with the orders inclosed, the leading movements of both armies, knowing that, should you fall in with an enemy's ship, and wish to pass as belonging to another nation, how important it would be that our movements, as well as those of the enemy, should be known to you."

"Howe, with the entire British army, has evacuated Boston. He was forced to do so by the menacing attitude of our forces. On the fifth of March, the British evidently meditated an attack, but, owing to the gale that sprung up, they could not land their men. The following night it rained incessantly, and a terrible storm raged all the next

day. This caused Howe to relinquish his design. Washington reinforced General Thomas with two thousand men on the Heights, and four thousand troops in two divisions, under Generals Sullivan and Greene were in readiness at Cambridge to be led by Putnam to an attack on Boston, while the troops from Roxbury were to cooperate with them. Howe, seeing how exceedingly critical his position was becoming, called a meeting of his officers; on the 7th they decided to leave the city. This they have since done, in a fleet of about one hundred and fifty sail. The place has been injured beyond imagination by the foe, together with what our several cannonadings and bombardments have caused. Private property has suffered much and, in many cases, men in affluent circumstances have been reduced to poverty. Had it not been that the British soldiers were governed by officers possessed of some prudence and honor, and were controlled by the fear of us, the town would have been given over to sack and pillage. We can not give you a better idea of their estimate of our skill and bravery, than quoting an extract from a letter of one of their officers, who says: "Neither hell, Hull, nor Halifax, can afford worse shelter than Boston."

"Washington has sent off five regiments to New York, together with a portion of his artillery, as it is supposed they will attack that city. On the nineteenth of May, the Franklin and Lady Washington started for a cruise, but got aground at Point Shirley. Before they could get off they were attacked by thirteen armed boats from the British vessels. They were enabled, however, to beat the enemy off, and finally succeeded in making their escape. You will keep a lookout for these vessels, and place yourself in communication with them, if they fall in your way. It is with the deepest feelings of sorrow we have to report the death of Captain Mugford, of the Franklin, who received a mortal wound while bravely defending his ship. His last words were characteristic of the courage he has always shown, and rung out far and clear, with his last breath: 'Don't give up the ship! You will beat them off!'"

"Your orders now, sir, are to proceed to Boston, and engage any of the enemy's vessels that you may fall in with. Prudence, however, will teach you to avoid some, but we have all confidence in your judgment. In proceeding to that port you will stand well out to sea, so as not to attract the attention of any along-shore vessels of the enemy. When you arrive, report to the commander of the port, and he may have further to communicate. You will make all haste upon the receipt of this, and obey orders to the letter."

"By order of the Marine Committee,

"ROBERT MORRIS, Chairman."

As soon as Captain Monmouth had read this paper, he lost no time in having his ship put in readiness for more active service. Water-casks were replenished, and from a store of ammunition carefully concealed on shore, the lack in the ship was replaced. The new men were assigned their respective stations and watches, and again the ship had only the sea and her duties before her.

It was late on the third day out, and Captain Monmouth, surrounded by his officers, was discussing their probable success or defeat in the new cruising-grounds they were ordered to, when the loud voice of the man at the lookout interrupted their conversation by reporting a sail in sight. The announcement created no confusion; there was no hurrying hither and thither, no asking of useless questions. Officers and men took the matter as an event of everyday occurrence. It was soon ascertained that the sail was a British man-of-war, and from its actions they judged it was in charge of a convoy. This was shortly verified by the appearance of two other vessels.

"Stand ready, my men, to mask ship!" calmly ordered the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And then, in a few moments, a voice called out:

"Ready forward! ready aft!"

"Over with it!"

"Over it is, sir!"

The purport of this order was to arrange along her sides, by means of cords and weights, a long, broad strip of white canvas. When on, it lay so snug as to appear like a white streak painted along her sides, and even at a short distance could not be noticed. This disguise was assumed to enable her to pass as the British vessel Asia, which was one of the most valuable and daring cruisers then hovering on the American coast. The appearance of the vessels was remarkably similar; the only way in which they could be distinguished was by their color. Even this discrepancy the canvas was intended to remedy.

"Will you engage, Captain Monmouth?" inquired Merton.

"That depends upon circumstances," he replied. "It is my intention to pass the Asia, and, if possible, to cut the convoys out during the night. Perhaps yonder war-vessel may be an old friend of ours. If so, I shall beat to quarters, but if, as I hope, she proves a stranger, I shall want one of you young gentlemen to go on board and obtain all the information you can."

The officers were somewhat startled at this proposition. They well knew the danger attending such a visit, for, did the British commander discover the true character of his visitor, he would scarce hesitate to shoot him on the spot.

"If you find it necessary to send one of us on board, sir, I, as the highest in rank, claim it as my privilege," at last said Merton. "Have you any hints to suggest relative to the interview?"

"None, save for you, if possible, to learn any

new signals, or the names of any additional vessel they may intend sending out. Should I hear the report of a pistol, I shall at once unmask and open fire; for, if you fire, it will be understood as a signal, and if they, it will be at you. Let your men remain in their boat, for, did they ascend to the deck, some indiscreet remark from them might discover all. Now, gentlemen, at once to your duties and posts. Let the men get to quarter without noise, and keep hid behind the bulwarks. You will see to this, Mr. Merton."

The ship was at once cleared for action, but in such a manner as not to attract the attention of the foe. It was now quite dark, but, being a bright starlight night, the outline of the man-of-war could be dimly observed. When arriving as near as possible, without creating suspicion, three lanterns were held aloft in the Black Ship's rigging the center one being oscillated to and fro. A short time, and the signal was answered by a single light, shining out from the mainmast of their enemy. The head of the ship was now put directly for the stranger, and Merton shortly after appeared on deck dressed in the uniform of a British officer, while, near by, stood the crew he had selected. The British vessel had also been brought up in the wind, to await her supposed friend, while the convoys being deeply laden, kept on, knowing their protector could easily overtake them.

"Ship ahoy!" came the hoarse hail from the man-of-war, as they approached within speaking distance.

"Ahoy!"

"What ship are you?"

"The British man-of-war Asia."

"Where did you come from?"

"Mouth of Choptank River—Chesapeake Bay."

"What were you doing there?"

"Looking for a rebel cruiser, called the Black Ship."

"We've heard something of that fellow. Did you find him?"

"No—he's a slippery chap. What vessel are you?"

"The Revenge."

"Won't you come on board?"

"When did you hear from the Colonies?"

This question was asked to ascertain, if possible, how well informed the enemy were of the events which had so recently been communicated to them.

"Not for a long time. We are sailing somewhat in the dark."

"What port are you making for?"

"Boston."

"You are sailing in the dark most certainly," remarked the captain, in an undertone, then again raising his voice, he asked: "If your orders do not exclude visitors, I should like to send my first officer on board."

"We shall be glad to see him—let him come at once."

"Do you think you will be known on board yonder ship?" he asked of Merton.

"I think not, as the vessel is new to me. I am willing to run the risk."

"Then go at once, and, after learning all you can, return without loss of time."

Descending the vessel's side, where the boat was in waiting, he was quickly rowed to the Revenge, and, as he reached the deck, was warmly welcomed by the commander. After seating themselves within the cabin, refreshments were placed before them, and conversation became general.

"How say you this Black Ship looks?" asked the officer.

"She is the perfect image of our vessel, and carries the same number of guns. A light difference exists in her being painted a jetty blackness, even to her masts and spars, while we carry a white streak."

"How are her sailing qualities?"

"Even as our own, which may be termed a most singular coincidence."

"Then you have had a trial of speed with her?"

"Often. Of late we have been detailed to look her up and destroy her. This we could do, were it not for her commander, who, for reasons best known to himself, keeps a sharp lookout, and has so far given us a stern chase, which would last forever, as we sail equally well."

"I have not heard much of this villain, but I hope it will be my good fortune to fall in with him some day, and if I do, you may depend upon it I shall not check my fire until I sink him."

"Perhaps the opportunity may offer sooner than you expect," replied Merton, in a somewhat altered tone and manner.

"What mean you?" asked the officer, sharply.

Merton started at the moment this question was asked, and at once comprehended the effect his remark had produced. Feeling confident, however, that he could not be suspected, he calmly glanced at the inquiring countenances surrounding him, and answered:

"Because she is now floating somewhere in this neighborhood, or I should not be here. The last port she touched at was on the coast of New Jersey, and we have followed on her track, but thus far she has eluded us."

"I wish you all success when you do meet her."

"I feel confident we shall have her heave in sight some time to-morrow," carelessly remarked Merton.

"Should such be the case, I will give you my assistance in taking her."

"Thank you, sir, and in my captain's name I accept your offer, although I am sure it will take hard fighting to capture that craft."

"Never mind the fighting part, young man, so long as victory crowns the end. I should much like

to meet this traitor to his king alone; and now that the notion suits me, bear my best wishes to your brave commander, and tell him that if, with the morning's light, the Black Ship—a fit name for such piratical authority as she sails under—is discovered, I would ask, as a particular favor, that I may have the privilege of sending her where she will give us no further trouble."

"Rest assured your request shall be granted," quickly replied Merton. "What number of men and guns have you?"

He was informed.

"The exact number we carry, although perhaps our crew exceeds yours a trifle, and you will be equally matched with that famous ship."

"You seem to know her well."

"True, sir, and so I ought, if cruising in her wake would tend to make us acquainted."

The conversation was, at this point, adroitly changed, for Merton was impatient to return. He inquired whether the signals had been altered, and also as to the number of vessels likely to leave England, both of which questions were answered at length. After ascertaining all that was of importance, he rose to leave. Reaching the side of the vessel, he turned, and extending his hand, which the captain grasped warmly, said:

"I bid you farewell, sir. Perhaps we shall soon meet again, and it may be when all is not so calm as at present, but when the cries of the wounded, the groans of the dying, the rending of wood and iron, and the clash of arms shall be heard, as we both battle for our cause. We shall bear you company through the night."

"And farewell to you, sir, for I have no doubt but the enemy you encounter will bear away the marks of good English blows on her hull."

Reaching his own ship Merton informed Captain Monmouth of what had transpired on the British vessel. The iron will of his determined leader was soon fixed on the course to be pursued.

An hour had passed, when suddenly a fog, which seemed to arise from the ocean, enveloped them. So dense it was, that an object not more than fifty feet ahead could not have been seen. This was the very thing Captain Monmouth could have wished. Being informed where the convoy lay, by means of their bells, which were toll'd at intervals, he shaped his course toward them. As the fog rose, the wind died away, and, as soon as the proximity of his prey would warrant, two boats, loaded to the water's edge with his followers, started for the vessels. We will not narrate the manner of their capture, merely stating that it was effected without noise, while the British man-of-war held on her course, little thinking what the morning light would reveal.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESULT OF THE RUSE.

THE Black Ship dropped in the wake of the Revenge, waiting for the day to dawn. As soon as the first streak of morning came faintly struggling through the fog, all was life and animation, in preparing the ship for action. Bulk-heads, mess-traps, etc., were got down; shot whipped up, and the guns carefully inspected and loaded for short ranges. Tubs were filled with water, and distributed where the men could readily reach them; chain-pumps worked without noise to ascertain whether all was clear; spare tiller got ready, rudder pendants cut adrift and led inboard, and relieving-tackles placed. The lower and topsail-yards and gaff hung with chain; topsail-sheets stoppered; toggies on the braces, and stays and rigging-snakes down; cack-pits and store-rooms well lighted. The magazine was opened and the passage wet; the decks were sanded. In fine, all that is required to clear a ship for action was done without noise or confusion—the men arranging themselves behind the bulwarks ready at the signal to spring to quarters. The officers were gathered aft, silently waiting for the fog to lift.

The sun had risen, and the wind, springing up at the same time, the mist suddenly disappeared, as if by magic, revealing to the astonished crew of the Revenge a startling sight. But a short distance from them lay the dark, ominous hull and towering masts of the Black Ship; her frowning sides threatening to belch forth their iron hail at any moment. Both officers and crew, with their locks still fixed upon the vessel, observed a piece of canvas lowered over the side, and on it in plain letters were written the following words:

"My superior grants the request you made known to me last night. The Black Ship this morning meets you alone. YOUR VISITOR."

The commander of the Revenge was as brave a man as ever trod deck. After reading the words, he glanced to where the convoys lay, and observed the hated flag of the United Colonies flying at each peak. He ordered the men beat to quarters, while the hot blood mounted to his very forehead.

"Fool that I was," he muttered, "not to discover the imposture, and my enemy in my power. This is no time for words or idle regrets. I told him that yonder cursed vessel I would sink, did ever chance throw her in my way; and, by Heaven, it shall be no fault of mine if my word is not kept!"

Then, addressing his crew, he added:

"In yonder ship, my lads, you see no common foe. They are bone of your bone, and in the contest which we are about to engage, you will simply be fighting a foe as unyielding as yourselves. Remember your cause—God and St. George! Sooner would I lead you to a watery grave, or blow you into fragments with the ship, than see this proud flag lowered to yonder pirate crew."

A loud shout followed these words, while with it

came the shrill sound of a whistle, and the men sprung to their guns.

As yet, not a human being was to be seen on the Black Ship, save the man at the wheel. At last the single tap of a drum was heard. In a second, out from their hiding-places rushed the crew.

"Aim low, my brave lads, and let not a single shot go wide of its mark. Remember you strike for life, liberty, and a country's honor. *Fire!*"

The noble fabric quivered with the recoil of her guns. The thunder of her broadside was deafening in its awful roar. Not a moment was spent in ascertaining the damage done. She was shot quickly up in the wind, and a second more her other broadside was brought to bear, and sent its iron hail into the sides of the enemy. The helm was again shifted, and she headed directly for the Revenge.

"Boarders away! Follow me, my men," shouted Merton, as the vessels met and were quickly made fast.

"Repel boarders!" was the loud response; and a hand-to-hand conflict commenced.

"Lay on, Ronald; for, by me faith, but yer surprising yourself," shouted Conway, springing to the side of his companion, and swinging his heavy sword with as much ease as if it had been a willow wand.

"Ay, laddie, I maun do my best, and I binna conne where I strake," he replied, as he let his weapon fall upon the head of a man who had, for some time successfully opposed his progress.

As he stepped over the prostrate body, he observed a man rush with a boarding-pike toward Merton, who was engaged with an officer, and raise the weapon in the act of striking. Springing quickly to one side, he dropped his pike, and, seizing the man by the waist, whirled him round, but in so doing, missed his footing, and both fell to the deck. His adversary was equally as powerful as himself, and the struggle which now commenced was one of pure strength and endurance. Over and over they rolled, each trying to secure some weapon, in which he was frustrated by the quickness of the other.

The contest was finally decided, however, by a volley of small-arms fired by the boarding party. Ronald, who happened at that moment to be undermost, noticed his foe relax his hold, and with a shiver roll off upon the deck. Raising himself upon his elbow—for he was completely exhausted—he gazed upon the death-struck countenance of his enemy.

"How now, mon; ha' a bit o' cold lead found its way to thy mow?" he asked, as a grim smile of triumph passed over his powder-stained visage.

Slowly turning, and evidently with great pain, his face wore a look of dying hatred, as he gurgled rather than spoke:

"Traitor! a brother's blood be on your head," and exhausted with the effort, he fell back dead.

"Na, mon," said Ronald, earnestly, addressing the ear that was deaf to all mortal sounds, "I be na more a brother to ye than be a Frenchman. Ye fight for England, and I for America, but," he added, shaking his head mournfully, and rising to his feet, "ye may na ha'e got far on the spirit road afore I follow ye, and then God will judge between us."

Looking about him to ascertain the situation of affairs, his face lit up with a glow of victory as he saw the flag of his adopted country flung to the breeze, where, but a short time before, the proud ensign of British power waved. Joining in the prolonged shout which issued from the sturdy throats of the followers of his ship, he turned his attention to the dead and dying strewn the deck.

Short but bloody had been that fight. Around the brave but simple-hearted Scotchman lay, stretched in their gore, the bodies of friend and foe. Some were already dead; some were hovering on death's dark verge; while others were praying in their agony for some kind hand to deal them the blow that should end their sufferings. On the countenance of the dead could be read, as on a printed page, the thoughts last uppermost in their minds. The will to conquer or die, of determination and unalterable purpose, was traced by the clinched teeth, the closed hand and the frowning brow. Some, perchance, had thought of home, with all its sunny joys—of father, mother, or a loved wife—alas, now parted with forever! and this was discernible in the melancholy that rested upon their pallid yet resolute faces. Oh, war! When will the virtue of carnage cease to hover over civilized lands?

As soon as the victory was surely won, the attention of the crew was directed to the sad task of burying the bodies of their late companions, and in removing all the wounded to where they could be attended to. A prize crew was detailed and put in charge of the Revenge, with orders to repair to the rendezvous on the coast of New Jersey, together with the two other vessels. The prisoners, for reasons best known to Captain Monmouth, were retained, and his vessel started for her destined port.

Arriving near Boston, the ship was kept under easy sail, and the strictest watchfulness kept, as the strength of the enemy who yet remained in those waters was not known. Carefully avoiding the more open sea, he made his way among the many small islands that abound within the bay. Placing his vessel in a deep but narrow cove, where he was securely hidden from view, he dispatched Merton on with the prisoners by land to the city, while he remained to watch, like the bird which America had selected as the symbol of her aspiring destiny, and, like it, to swoop upon any vessel which might chance in his way.

Merton safely reached the end of his journey, and was warmly welcomed. Owing to the yet disturbed state of the country, his departure was delayed from day to day, until, finally, a month glided by, without

any definite order received for him to carry back to his ship. He almost feared that Captain Monmouth would weary of this inaction, and that when he did return it would be to find his vessel gone. His mind was set at rest, however, by the arrival in June of Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, with seven hundred of his men who had been made prisoners, together with a note from his commander, in which he remarked:

"I have waited for you with much anxiety, and at times have feared you had fallen into the hands of the few dissimulating Tories yet lurking in secret places. You have with you Ronald, Conway and other sturdy fellows, who are equal to a host in themselves, and this reassures me of your safety. This will be handed you by the officer in command of the party taking in the prisoners, in whose capture my vessel took active part. Let not a moment be lost in returning when you receive our final orders, for this inactivity is becoming irksome."

A few days after this was received, news came of the intended attack of the British troops on the American forces then entrenched on Long Island; and, also, that as the enemy's ship, *Robuck*, had become exceedingly troublesome, the Black Ship was to sail at once, either to destroy her or lead her off by some stratagem.

Merton at once was recalled. Without delay he summoned his followers and started. The distance from the city to the cove where the vessel lay was some twenty miles. Our seamen had accomplished nearly half of this distance, when, on turning a point of the road, they suddenly came upon a man seated where a little stream was murmuring its way to the sea. He was, evidently, one of those vagabonds who, during the Revolutionary struggle, did so much toward injuring the American cause by giving information to the enemy of the movements of the Colonial troops.

"Good-day to ye all," he said, as the party came up to him, speaking in a voice whose very accent spoke the enemy.

"Good-day," replied Merton, briefly, as he eyed the fellow sharply.

"You needn't speak quite so sharp, mister," retorted the man, boldly. "It wasn't nothing but a civil question I axed you, and ought to have a civil answer."

"I grant it," replied Merton, smiling in spite of himself; "but what more do you want than I have said?"

"Nothing, as I knows on, that you can give. But which way are you traveling?"

"To the end o' our journey," quickly answered Ronald to this inquiry.

"But you be all a sharp lot of chaps," replied the fellow, bursting into a loud guffaw.

"We be sharp enough to ken a fool frae a knave, and ye be none o' the first."

"I ain't either, but a poor man from the country, who has been kicked out of house and home by the Tories, and all because I wanted to fight for the Colonies," replied the stranger, casting his eyes upon the ground and wearing the appearance of a man alike despised and ill-treated both by friend and foe.

"And ha'e ye struck a blow for the cause?"

"Not yet, for I cin't had a chance."

"Ha'e na had a chance!" replied the Scotchman, in indignation. "Where were ye when the battles of Lexington or Bunker Hill, or the fights of Boston, were ganging on? Ye maun keep a strict tongue and a canny speech, else it will go hard wi' ye."

"Didn't I tell you the Tories had hold of me?" replied the man, angrily.

"Na, ye dinna, for ye said they had kicked ye frae house and home."

"And so they did at last; but when they let me go the fighting was over."

"Over, mon? ha, but ye be not right there, for it will be mony a long year yet afore England lets the Colonies gang free."

"Glad of it, for I can then have a hand in helping my country."

"Your country!" spoke the hot-blooded Irishman, who all along had been a most attentive listener to the conversation. "Your country! Be me sowl, but there's many a long mile betwixt this and your country!"

"I was born here," quickly replied the man.

"Faith, that may be, but your heart's over the ocean, and to my mind you're nothing but a sneak, and a spy, and a Tory; and by all my hopes of pardon, if I had the mindin' of you limb of tree, it would bend a little lower with the weight of your body tied to it by a rope round your neck."

"And were you alone, my jolly loud-talking Jack, I'd soon make a hole in your body, that would show the light what you last had for dinner."

"Hold!" interrupted the calm, yet stern voice of Merton, who, attracted by the loud tones and passionate accents of the angry speakers, had turned just in time to intercept the blows that were about being given and received. "Hold, Conway! Put up your knife, for you surely would not use it on a single man were he twice a foe, and—"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Merton, but this chap ain't the man he wants to seem. When I told him this minute what I thought of him, and what I'd do with him if I had my way, he didn't speak much like a countryman—did he, Ronald?"

"Na, sir, that he didna."

"What were his words?" asked Merton, looking sternly at the fellow.

The man hastened to tell, and by the time he finished—for he added numerous opinions of his own—they had arrived at a part of the road where it was bounded on one side by a dense wood, and on the other by a steep bank. The stranger, who had per-

sistently followed—although Ronald had kept him in the rear—now stepped quickly to the front, and boldly addressed the lieutenant, throwing off the disguise of voice that hitherto he had used.

"You have heard that man's story, and I wish to inform you that he is perfectly right in his surmises. I dogged your footsteps when first you left your ship, and wished to make your acquaintance; but, partly owing to the rapidity of your movements, and also fearing your strength—for at the distance I was, I mistook your prisoners for members of your own party—I was frustrated in my wishes. This time I have been more successful, and am rejoiced to find that you consist of so civil and obliging a party. It is my desire to keep you company."

"And now I am determined you shall not," replied Merton, the hot blood flushing to his brow in crimson.

"Then, sir, ye must go with me, whether or not," he answered, looking full in the young man's face with a sneering smile.

As he finished speaking, he raised his hand to his mouth, evidently with the intention of uttering a signal; but the evil smile passed from his face, and the spark of hatred died in his eye, as the cold muzzle of a pistol pressed his temple, and the voice of Merton hissed in his ear:

"Make the slightest sound or give a single wave of your hand, and by the God who hears me, I will send your black soul to his presence." Raising his voice, that the foe, who he felt convinced were lurking within the woods, could hear, he said: "I have your leader in my power, and if one dog of you dares to show his head, it will be the signal for your captain's death. Gather around me, my brave lads, with drawn swords and ready pistols, and if they wish to try our mettle they shall see how free men can fight. Move on slowly; and do you, Ronald and Conway, stand ready to cut down this fellow in case they fire on me."

Cautiously they proceeded, but, though occasional rustling was heard, not an assailant was seen. At last they emerged into the open country, and soon the tall mast of the ship hove in sight.

Feeling perfectly secure from attack, Merton replaced his weapon, and with more hasty strides proceeded onward. The prisoner was recognized by one of the crew, as one of the most bloodthirsty followers of the king infesting that part of the country. The day following he was hung at the yard-arm. Such was the way spies and betrayers were served in those times of war in earnest.

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

It is unnecessary to refer to the New York of 1776. It was then the "Great Metropolis" in embryo—a city of small dimensions but of magnificent promise. The "Battery" and "Bowling Green" were then the great hearts of the commercial and social world—now, alas! they are so far "down town" as to be outlawed by gentility! Where now are acres of brick building and labyrinths of streets, then were swamps, hills, valleys, farms, "country seats" and commons. Chambers street then was the utmost city limit—all was "the country" beyond. It will require no little stretch of the reader's imagination to portray Broadway barricaded, together with all the streets leading to it, to locate batteries on eminences behind Trinity church. A redoubt and battery at Hellgate guarded the passage of enemies' ships to and fro in the Sound, while the North River, and, in fact, all expugnable points, were put in a position of defense.

General Lee saw that the Long Island heights was too important a position to be neglected, and at once commenced throwing up a series of intrenchments at different points, one of which was located in the rear of the then small town of Brooklyn, and which is now, as then, known by the name of "Fort Greene." On the southern point of Long Island, and securely shut in from the sea by Coney Island, extends a deep cut, or, more properly, a bay, in which are numerous offsets and bayous. At the time we invite the reader's attention, and when all were actively at work preparing for the coming foe, in one of these offsets lay, safely moored and completely hidden by the most ingenious contrivances, the Black Ship.

After sailing from Foston, she had, with the most consummate skill of her commander, succeeded in eluding observation, and arrived in the secluded bay to await the opportunity for service in the moment of greatest need. Her crew were apparently asleep; yet that silence and apparent inactivity were ominous of stern duty. One of the boats was gone. It seemed as if the ship needed its return to spring into life and animation.

The sun had set. Twilight began to gather slowly around, giving to her usual gloomy outline a still deeper hue, when the measured stroke of oars, telling of a crew well skilled in their handling, was heard, and a boat shot in sight. The deserted deck was quickly enlivened by the forms of men who had so often pressed them in the din of battle and anxious faces looked out upon their returning comrades, eager to learn what tidings they had to communicate.

As the boat lightly touched the ship's side, and Merton sprung on deck, he was met by the captain, who, after leading him beyond the hearing of the crew, asked him what he had discovered.

"I carefully proceeded after leaving the ship," answered the lieutenant, "narrowly watching the shore, and inspecting all the inlets, until I struck the water running between Coney Island and the main shore. This I followed west until I arrived at Gravesend Bay. Here, sir, I discovered the vessels of the enemy. Fearful of approaching too close, I ran the boat near the shore, and landed two of the

men, whom I ordered to proceed inland, while I remained with the boat. They had been gone over two hours when I deemed it prudent to dispatch four others to look them up, but, as they were upon the point of starting, the two came in, and reported having found many of the enemy already landed, and their pickets were then advanced as far as New Utrecht."

"Then we will find it a difficult task to communicate with our friends on shore, and as to the Roebuck, it is impossible for us to find her, unless we receive information from the army," said Captain Monmouth, thoughtfully.

"Send off a land-party, and let them try before the British advance further to reach the line of our army," suggested Merton.

"But of what use would that be; for, did they succeed in reaching, how would they return?"

"It will be a risk, I grant, but it might, perhaps, prove successful."

"How far are they from us in force?"

"Not more than two miles and a half."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the captain, starting.

"Yes, sir, and their pickets can not be more than a mile; besides, they certainly have scouting parties."

"Then we are in danger of being discovered?"

"Excuse me, but I think not. They will scarcely think of finding enemies hid away among all this sand."

"You are, perhaps, right, Merton, but we will be wise in placing some of our men to picket the shore. You will see that they are arranged under proper heads, and relieved at stated hours. To return to the fleet—how are they?"

"All, save one ship, are anchored under the protecting guns of the war-vessels; that one seems to think precaution useless, for she lays full a mile to the east of her companions."

"What say you, if the morning light shows her still further off?"

"All you have to do is to say the words 'take her,' and it shall be done."

"I like to hear it. You have the order; Mr. Merton, you will this night capture that ship or sink her."

The young man at once set himself the task of selecting his crew, and also of arranging the guard on shore.

The hour of midnight arrived. With muffled oars, three boats, loaded down with armed men, shot out from the deep shadows of the vessel's side, and pulled rapidly toward the open water of the sea. Not a word was spoken. Not a sound was heard, save the light splash of the oars; or the faint gurgle of the water under the bows.

On board the British vessel all was fancied security. The crew had turned in, leaving a solitary man to watch. Even he nodded at his post. In the cabin, quite a party were gathered, where joy seemed to reign. Derision of "the Yankees" served to season their entertainment.

"Well, sir, I must admit," remarked one of the company, addressing the captain of the vessel, "that they fight well. Look at Bunker Hill, and tell me if the men of any other nation, except our own, would have stood so valiantly as they."

"Stood!" ejaculated a young man, in a contemptuous manner. "Do you call standing behind earthworks, and firing upon our gallant troops, who, unprotected, advanced upon them, the act of brave men?"

"I do, sir, call the act brave, when we take into consideration that they were devoid of all drill and discipline, and but poorly armed. I tell you, gentlemen, that, had the Colonial troops not exhausted all their ammunition, we would have left Boston in a far different manner than we did, although, God knows, we did it then under fire and in more haste than I wished to see."

"You seem to hold a high opinion of these rebels," said the young man.

"As men, I do; but as rebels, I despise them and their bravest deeds. But one thing in which I am afraid our Government is mistaken, and when it is too late will discover, is, that these Colonies are weak, possessed of little or no strength to carry on the war. If I mistake not, we shall find that years will be consumed before we bring them under subjection; and the Crown, although it has its hands full elsewhere, should send every man that it can beg, borrow or hire to this land."

"Allow me to offer a correction to your remark, as to the number of years it will be required to subdue the rising and determined spirit of America to be free. In place of several, insert an eternity of years."

At the entrance of the cabin stood the commanding form of Merton. His hand rested on the handle of his sword, while his eye was lit up with the flush of anger and superiority.

"Who are you?" demanded the captain of the vessel, angrily, as he sprung to his feet to confront his visitor.

"Your superior on board this vessel; your equal as man to man," was the firm reply.

"By heavens, we will try that matter with sharper tools than words," replied the captain, as he seized a cutlass from its peg, and advanced, menacingly.

"A good motto, and one I would advise you, at this time especially, to adopt, is, to think well before you act," remarked the young man, in a contemptuous manner.

"This insult is beyond endurance, and one that must be resented," said the officer, stepping to the captain's side.

"I will explain to you, gentlemen, a few things that may be extremely unpleasant to hear. Your vessel has changed owners, and you are prisoners!"

"Prisoners!" they all exclaimed at a breath.

"Exactly."

"What ho! on deck!" shouted the captain.

"Signal the fleet, for there is treachery here!"

"I have no doubt your men hear, but, as they are in durance vile, it is beyond their power to obey," replied Merton, to the captain's order.

"Did I understand you to say that this vessel is captured?"

"You did."

"And without my being aware of it?"

"I am so inclined to think."

"And by what vessel?"

"None at all; but by boats under my command."

"And who are you?"

"Harold Merton, second officer on board the Black Ship," was answered, proudly.

"Once of his Majesty's service, I believe?" remarked the captain, after recovering from the surprise the mention of the vessel's name had made.

"I was, but now, thank God, my life is devoted to the liberty of my adopted country. Death I do not shun while battling in her cause."

"Young man, your words should blister your tongue with—"

"Hold, sir," interrupted Merton, sternly. "I do but hear the same from every Englishman whenever we chance to meet, and I tire of it. You think America wrong; I, that she is right; so for the sake of sparing words, if for naught else, let us refrain from speaking of it further."

"As you please, young man; I still have my opinion of you."

"Think me a devil, if you will, but have a care the thought does not find utterance, for, should the slightest whisper reach my ear I shall forget you are my prisoner, and offer you violence. But enough of this," he added, controlling his anger by a strong effort, and speaking more calmly. "Lay your weapons upon that table, gentlemen, and follow me to the deck."

This command was at once obeyed. Without a word, the revelers all left the cabin.

The manner in which the capture had been effected was, from its extreme simplicity, completely successful. Ronald removed his clothing when the boats had arrived as near as prudence would warrant, and swam slowly onward. A large bunch of sea-weed he knotted as firmly as possible, and keeping it on that side of his head against which the tide struck, allowed himself to float down toward the vessel. The ship's bows were soon reached. A line was found, and after ascertaining that it was made fast, the seaman carefully ascended, hand over hand, to the deck. Peering over her bulwarks, his eye encountered the figure of the solitary watch, who, leaning against the mainmast, seemed entirely listening to the voices that reached him from the cabin. Feeling convinced that the remainder of the crew were either below or had left the ship, he lightly stepped on deck and cautiously neared the man. When within a short distance, a quick bound, a heavy blow, and his foe lay insensible at his feet. Hastily securing him by means of the ropes that lay near at hand, he proceeded to signal the boat's crew of his success. Searching the pockets of the prostrate man, he found to his satisfaction a tinder-box, which, together with a strand of tarred rigging, were the necessary articles he wished. He next proceeded to the ship's side, and leaning well over, ignited the rope. Allowing it to burn brightly for a moment, he cast it into the water. What followed can be readily conjectured. The first that her captain knew of the "change of owners" was when so informed by the entrance of Merton. All of value that the ship contained was in money, of which there was quite a harvest. The treasure and the prisoners were removed, holes were made in the ship's bottom, and she was left to sink. Before the small boats reached their rendezvous, the British ship had gone down as silently as if a shadow had passed away. When daylight broke, the enemy was astounded to find her gone.

CHAPTER VII.

ASHORE ADVENTURES.

The morning following the events last narrated, three men could have been seen, at an early hour, wending their way as if in search of some person whom, at any moment, they might encounter. They were dressed in the uniform of the British navy, and "rolled along" in that peculiar manner characteristic of the true "old salt." So well were they disguised, that were it not for the tell-tale voice of Ronald, and the hasty humor of Conway, they would pass as strangers to the soil. Their companion was none other than Lieutenant Merton.

"Keep a sharp look-out, for their pickets can not be far from here, and, if the thing is possible, I wish to avoid them. If I find we can not do this, we must endeavor to see them first, so that we can approach without creating suspicion," remarked the young man.

"Could na we keep further to the east, sir, and then belike we might give them a slip?" asked Ronald.

"I am afraid not," replied Merton, "for they most certainly have placed guards from their main body entirely across the bay."

"Look at yonder chap, sir," called Conway, in a low tone; "by me faith, but he's giving us a sample of what he can do in the way of handling his piece."

"Don't point," quickly ordered Merton. "I see him, and he's signaling to discover whether we are friends or no. Let me precede you, and remember who you represent. You, Conway, be guarded with your temper, and in no case, no matter what the provocation may be, let either word or action betray who you are."

He then stepped a few paces in advance and stopped. The soldier still kept on signaling, but receiving no answer, brought his piece to his shoulder, as if about to fire. Merton instantly called out, in a voice which harmonized with his assumed character:

"Avast there, you long-shore lubber, with that gun. What are you going to do? shoot an English sailor?"

The man lowered his piece, and, turning, beckoned to a companion who was hidden from view. Soon a corporal with a file of men was seen approaching.

"For the last time, I warn you both to keep a wise head and a close tongue," hurriedly remarked Merton. "My blood be on your heads if you fail my orders."

"Dinna fear, sir, but we will baith be canny," said Ronald.

"Well, what do you want, and what are you doing outside the lines?" asked the corporal as he halted his party a little distance from them.

"First, Mister Corporal," replied Merton, gruffly, "we don't want to get a hole punched into us between wind and water, seeing we ain't enemies; and next, we happened to be outside of your lines, as you call them, because we did not find anybody to keep us in, and being out on a cruise without chart or compass, we got afool of sand-hills, and one thing or another, until we might have run into an enemy's port, for all we'd have known."

"Where do you want to go to?"

"We belong to the *Roebuck*, and won't mind laying glass on her again, if we know the direction in which she lays."

"I don't know where your vessel is, but you can find out from the officer of the picket."

"Which way does the ocean lay from here, for if we can get a sight of that, we can do well enough by ourselves."

"It's off this way," replied the soldier, pointing toward the south-west; "but you'll have to be examined by our officer before I can allow you to pass."

"Listen to that, lads," exclaimed Merton, with a loud laugh. "The Yankees gave these soldiers such a scare at Boston that they're afraid to trust a man, no matter how he's dressed, or where he hails from. Heave ahead, Mister Corporal, for we'll let your officer examine us. He'll find we are as good copper-bottomed, English-oaked man-of-war's-men, as ever sailed into his quarters."

They proceeded on some quarter of a mile or more, when they were ushered into the presence of the officer commanding that division of the picket guard.

"I found these men, sir," said the corporal, with a salute, "on our extreme right, approaching our lines."

"Which way were they coming?"

"From the south, sir."

"And their manner—was it suspicious?"

"Not in the least, sir. They came up as if they didn't know what a guard was posted for."

"How about this, my lads—where did you come from?"

"From the *Roebuck*, your Honor," replied Merton, twirling his hat in his hand, and seeming ill at ease.

"How long since you left your ship?"

"Ten days, sir."

This was said at a venture, but the young man happened to stumble on the right answer, for the next question assured him of this, giving him a clew how to answer further questions.

"Let me see," said he, referring to a book lying before him, and rapidly turning over the leaves. "Ah, here it is. 'Frigate *Roebuck* changed station, to operate with the advance guard. She will protect the left flank, which will extend to the water.' It is now a week since she sailed, and you left her ten days ago, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"How came you on shore?" he asked, sharply.

"Had three days' leave, and stayed over time, sir."

"What was the cause?"

"Well, sir, it's a failing we Jacks have. We happened in with some friends, and took a little too much ale."

"But you came in on our right flank, while you should have approached our left. How happened that?"

"I don't know, sir, unless our heads were muddled, and we lost our way," replied Merton, looking down, as if ashamed.

"You are honest-looking fellows, and wear the right kind of cloth, so I will pass you, without further parley, to where you can be forwarded to your ship."

The sailors thanked him, and, taking the pass which was handed them, bowed themselves from his presence. Arriving outside, Merton glanced at the paper, and, to his chagrin, found it read, "Pass these men *within* the lines."

"This is bad," said he, a perplexed look resting on his countenance.

"What, sir?" inquired Ronald.

"This pass grants us leave to travel within their guard."

"Then, sir, let us make a bauld strake, and fight our way through."

"Ay, ay, sir; that's the plan. Do as Ronald says, for by me blessed father's memory, but we're good for six of them, and if it comes to a push, I'll take three of them alone," said Conway, eagerly.

"I am afraid we shall have to do so, for, to reach the American lines I am determined, if we fight every inch of our way through."

The delay occasioned by their detention, with the numerous halts the guards compelled them to make,

had brought them toward the middle of the afternoon, and, as nothing had passed their lips since morning, the gnawings of hunger were being keenly felt. Not wishing to exhaust the little food they had, they set to work looking about for some house or inn where they could procure refreshment. From the brow of a hill they perceived a house in the valley to the right. Around it could be seen numerous persons, and, tied to the tree, were several horses evidently belonging to a party of dragoons.

"I shall wait until the sun has set for those fellows yonder to leave, though our disguise is good, and we could evidently pass unquestioned. Still, there is not the most friendly feeling existing between soldiers and sailors. No doubt they are drinking, and perhaps might drop some remarks we might feel inclined to resent," remarked Merton.

The men, without reply, seated themselves, and patiently waited the further orders of their leader. As the sun sunk behind the distant woods, the word was given, and all haste was made to reach the house. The building had been converted into an inn, evidently without the least attempt at show. The sign was the figure of a man, supposed to represent a king, with a crown upon his head, whose points resembled a picket fence, and the scepter very like a potato-masher. Underneath were the scarcely legible words: "The King's Arms." The interior was in keeping with the outside; and Merton, seating himself at one of the long, dirty tables, inquired as to what the house afforded in the way of food. As it consisted of a single dish, the selection was readily made, and much to the astonishment of all, unlike the filthy appearance of the place, the food was plain and palatable. It was eaten with a relish. After hunger was satisfied, Merton arose, and going to the till, paid the demand. He was on the point of retracing his steps, when a half-drunken soldier, one of a party of seven who were seated at the further extremity of the room, placed himself directly in his way.

"Well, m' fine sea-water animal, where did you come from?" he asked, placing his hands on his hips and looking impudently into the young man's face.

"From outside, and if that ain't enough for you to know, from my ship," replied Merton, in as careless a manner as he could assume.

"Where's your ship?"

"On top of the water, if she ain't underneath."

"Look here, my fine fellow," said the soldier, speaking angrily, while several of his companions gathered closer about him. "If you don't want to get a broken head, you had better answer a little more civil."

"It's very true that I don't want to get my head broke, and what's more, don't intend to; but what right have you to ask me where I came from, or to what ship I belong?"

"Because I want to find out something about you, and I mean to. You see, my jolly sea-dog, I have been with you chaps for a while back, and have had more kicks than kisses, so I don't feel over and above friendly to any of you short-coats, and would as lieve have a falling out, together with a little fight, as not."

"Then fight with those who have given you cause?" quickly replied Merton, and in his natural voice, attempting to pass.

"No, you don't, my fine fellow," said one of the others, stepping by his companion's side and effectually blocking the way. "No you don't, till we have a better look at you. D'you hear, boys, how this chap can talk when he's a mind to? Let's take him and his companions along to quarters, for I swear if I believe they're friends to the king, in spite of their dress."

Merton saw at once that his situation was becoming perilous, and that the soldier who now confronted him was quick to notice and prompt to act.

"What do you take me for?" he asked, with perfect self-possession.

"Perhaps a traitor, and maybe a spy. But we'll find out."

"Here—look at my paper!" he remarked, extending the pass.

The soldier made a rapid movement as if to snatch it; but Merton quickly withdrew his hand, at the same time saying:

"Not quite so fast, for I sha'n't trust it with you. If I was a spy I wouldn't have this; so if you like you can take a look, but you don't take hold."

"If you're what you say you are, you wouldn't be afraid to trust me with your pass?"

"You ain't quite right, comrade. I'm afraid to trust you because this friend of yours says he wouldn't mind having a fight; and as you side with him I suppose you're of the same mind. Perhaps you would like to get me in limbo so as to spite yourselves on me for what other seamen might have done to you, and the only way you can do that is by stealing this paper."

"There's some reason in that, and I might have been a little fast," he replied, after a pause. "I can't forget, though, the way you spoke; but I'll let you go if you'll answer me a question."

"Let me go!" exclaimed Merton with some temper; "you had better get hold of me before you talk of letting me go!"

"You say you're a man-of-war's-man?" he questioned, without heeding the remark.

"Yes."

"What's your ship's name?"

"The *Roebuck*."

"Where is she?"

"She's with the advance along the coast."

While Merton was thus quietly allowing himself to be questioned, the two sailors were not idle. Ronald had left the room, and shortly returned with three stout, heavy sticks, one of which he handed Conway, who received it with evident satisfaction.

"Now, by the powers, I'm ready as soon as Mr. Merton gives the word," he whispered to Conway, "and if I was he, I'd not stop talking to that chap any longer."

"Na, mon, nor I either," replied Ronald.

The soldier continued interrogating the young man, who answered without showing the least temper. At last his tone began to partake too much of command, and Merton determined to submit no longer.

"You may cut your questions short, for I am determined to answer you no longer."

"Just as you like, my jolly Jack; but if you're all British you won't mind saying, 'God save the king.'"

"He never did me harm, and when his hour comes I hope God will save the king," replied Merton, evasively.

"But that ain't quite the way you've got to say it."

"Got to, have I? Now stand out of my way, for I sha'n't be stopped by you any longer."

"But I won't, youngster."

"Then I'll put you out," and before the man was aware of his intention, he struck him a blow that would have felled an ox. The soldier fell at Merton's feet.

"At them, my brave lads, for it's fight now in earnest. Save life if you can avoid it, but break as many heads, Conway, as you please," he shouted, as, springing over the prostrate body, he placed himself by their side. Receiving the heavy club from Ronald, he rushed back into the fray. Right manfully did the three bear themselves, and so completely were the soldiers taken by surprise, that, before they could gather their arms, they were laid senseless by the blows which were dealt with no niggardly hand.

"Faith, and you're the last, my robin red-breast, and ye'll wake with a pain in your head, I'm thinking," said Conway, as with his powerful arm he let his club fall on the head of the remaining soldier.

"Follow me at once," ordered Merton, speaking in his usual tone. "We have not a moment to lose, for this will soon be noised abroad, and our escape will be entirely cut off."

They turned as if loth to leave, and followed their leader out into the gathering darkness, to be soon lost to sight.

The afternoon of the day following, Merton and Ronald arrived within the American lines. Conway was not with them, having been ordered the difficult task of finding his way back to the ship and to report what had been learned respecting the *Roebuck*.

The two were dressed as when they left their vessel, except that their jackets were unbuttoned, revealing upon the breast of their shirts the words Black Ship, worked in distinct letters. Merton at once set about finding the commanding officer, but he found it a task of great difficulty. It was long after sundown before his attempt proved successful. Arriving at General Greene's headquarters, he was informed, much to his disappointment, that an interview could not be obtained, no matter how important the news he had to communicate, as the general was lying extremely ill of a fever. He was directed to General Sullivan, but deferred the interview until the following morning.

An early hour found him closeted with the general, who appeared much pleased at meeting him.

"So you are attached to the Black Ship?" he said, with an approving smile.

"I am proud to say I am, sir," replied Merton.

"How far were the enemy, when you passed through their lines, from our outposts?"

"Not more than three miles, I should say. I am inclined to think, however, that the British troops have not all landed, for the bay is not sufficiently full of transports to warrant it."

"Where is your ship, Lieutenant Merton?"

"Laying hid from sight in a cove that sets into the mainland, and directly back of Coney Island. Captain Monmouth's intention is to attack or draw off the English man-of-war *Roebuck*, if possible, for I doubt not but she will tender valuable service to the enemy, and cause havoc and death in our lines."

"You are right, sir, for already some of our poor fellows have fallen before her shot. She carries heavy guns, and I am fearful will prove too formidable an adversary for your ship to encounter."

"She may, sir, but Captain Monmouth is a man of prudence; what he lacks in metal he fully replaces by stratagem. It will be impossible, general, for me to return to my vessel; and as every arm that can raise a weapon for our suffering country is needed, I should like to be assigned a place where I can be useful. If this cannot be done I shall have to fight on my own responsibility; but I am sure I shall feel more valiant, and strike a firmer blow, were I to battle under the control of a good leader."

"Your wish is granted, sir," replied the general, hastily writing a note and handing it to Merton. "Take this to Lord Stirling; he will assign you to some post. Now, good-by, and God be with you. It may be that we shall never meet again; but should we fall, let our dying moments be made sweet by the thoughts that we find our graves battling for one of the noblest causes man ever engaged in. Good-by, Mr. Merton."

The two parted with a warm pressure of the hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOUBLE CONFLICT.

THE moment was rapidly drawing near when the infant colonies were about to fight their first pitched battle against that country whose banners floated on every sea. The twenty-second of August came.

The entire British forces landed on Long Island. Instant information of this was sent by means of the chain of pickets; but, as if to nerve the arm of the eight thousand eight hundred brave sons of America who had resolved "to conquer or to die," came the joyous tidings of the signal repulse of the English fleet at Fort Moultrie. Four days afterward, the army of their foe was ready for the attack. Its line extended from the coast, between Gravesend and Utrecht, to Flatbush and Flanders.

Between the two armies what a contrast! On one side the hardy, undisciplined yeomen; on the other the well-trained soldiers, used to carnage and the din of battle. Here the homespun garments of the Continental; there the gaudy, well-kept uniforms of the Briton; here the rusty sword, the musket snatched from the peg over the family hearthstone, and the few blood-bought pieces of cannon; opposed were the polished arms, the abundance of ammunition, and the glistening parks of artillery. With the one the confidence of victory, the obedience to officers, and the fatal idea of despising their antagonists; with the other the love of country, of home, the justice of their cause, but, above all, the tie of brotherhood, and the resolve to do or die. Thus stood our forefathers—thus let us ever stand.

It was a calm night. The full harvest-moon threw her flood of light over the hilltop and down into the valleys; her beams fell upon the slumbering forms of soldiers who lay in the open air. Near every hand lay a weapon ready to be grasped. Every ear seemed half open to catch the first tap of the signal-drum. The night wore on, and the clouds that had risen chased themselves sluggishly across the moon's pale face. But, hark! The sharp report of musketry is heard in the distance. The startling sound roused the American camp into activity.

Among the first to hear that sound was Merton. He quickly formed the little band of scouts which Lord Stirling had placed under his control, and anxiously waited the other to move. News soon came from the distant pickets that their foe was advancing, and that the Delaware troops, under Colonel Allen, were retreating slowly before the overwhelming force hurled against them.

The order for Merton to advance soon came. He was directed to scout the road leading to the Narrows, keeping, however, close enough to enable him to readily communicate with the troops following. With cautious steps, the band started forward. Its progress was uninterrupted, until near daybreak, when the Delaware regiment was met, together with the retiring pickets. Merton instantly threw his little force to the front, where the rifles of his men sent many of the foe to their last account.

Lord Stirling, as soon as information reached him, formed his two regiments along an advantageous ridge ascending from the road, to a piece of wood on the top of a hill. The brave Delawares halted and reformed, while the pickets, rallying on Merton's force, received the advancing columns of the British with well-directed volleys. A warm engagement ensued. Their assailants, however, proved too strong, for it was soon ascertained that they consisted of two full brigades under General Grant.

The Americans were again compelled to fall back. They took post on an eminence opposite Lord Stirling's position, and co-operated with Kiehl's rifle corps, whose deadly fire mowed down the compact columns of the foe as fast as they appeared. Thus the battle became general, and well did Merton merit the position to which he had been assigned. He was ever foremost in the fight, urging his men by voice and example, to most strenuous efforts; and they, catching his spirit, rushed with such impetuosity upon the foe that the line of his front began to waver.

Suddenly a heavy firing was heard in their rear. Every hand was stayed. Again volley after volley broke upon their ear, and they became conscious of the fearful truth that the enemy had succeeded in turning their flank. Dismay and confusion followed. No longer were the advancing Hessians determinedly faced; but, in spite of the efforts of their generals to rally them, the Continental troops broke and attempted to return to their camp. Vain was the effort. On every side they encountered the drawn sabers or glistening bayonets of the foe. They were driven hither and thither, cut off from all the avenues of escape, and slaughtered with scarce a show of resistance.

Merton, finding that retreat lay through the enemy's ranks, in few words informed his men of the fact, and proposed that they should hew their way through to freedom. This gallant proposition was received with a shout of approbation. Augmenting his forces from the numerous stragglers that surrounded them, he arranged his ranks, and then led them to the work. Skirting the base of the eminence which they had so lately occupied, he wound his way, choosing the shelter of the more thickly wooded part, until, by the din, he was made aware that they had arrived near enough for him to put into operation his hastily-formed plan.

Selecting a few of the bravest, he put them under Ronald's charge, and ordered them forward, while he effectually concealed the remainder behind a little bluff, which lay to their right, there to await the result that he hoped the Scotchman would effect. Roland had not proceeded far, when he suddenly came upon the enemy. For a time he made a determined fight; then, giving the word his party gave way slowly at first, but soon broke into a hasty retreat, leading his pursuers directly into the ambush prepared by Merton. The Hessians were received with a volley, that caused perfect havoc in their ranks; and before time was given them to reform he ordered the reserve set apart, to fire. Then, ere the smoke had cleared away, he charged upon them

in force, and with two-thirds of his command, reached their rear. Here he once more halted and closed his ranks. What was his sorrow to learn that Ronald was nowhere to be found. It was no time then to look for missing men. The order was given, and the band moved on. This "forlorn hope" had gone somewhat over a mile, when a sharp firing was heard a little toward their right. Merton, thinking perhaps it might be the Scotchman, at once started to the rescue. Arriving within sight, he observed a band of brave men, contending with a force treble their number. His generous nature was fired at the sight.

"What say you, my men?" said he, turning to his followers. "Shall we leave yonder party of countrymen to their fate, and make our escape, or go to their support?"

"Lead on—we'll follow," was the resolute answer. "Boarders, away!" shouted the young man, forgetting that he was not leading a party of his own hardy sea-dogs. Waving his sword above his head, he started to the rescue.

The combatants heard the shout, and while the Americans grasped their arms with firmer hands, and dealt their blows with sterner force, the English hastily attempted to put their forces in position to meet the charge.

On came Merton with the velocity of a tempest, and hurled himself upon their center with such impetuosity, that everything gave way before him. It was but for a moment, however; for, by the exertions of their officers, the British troops held firm, and the carnage became fearful. The enemy had yet the advantage of numbers, but the determination of their assailants was irresistible. They began to waver, when the loud report of a piece of ordnance met their ear, and a ball went whistling over their heads. The contending parties at once paused to ascertain against which party the missile was directed.

Through a break in the trees, the open water could be seen; and while they gazed, a rush of smoke wafted in sight. The next instant the frigate Roebuck appeared upon the scene. The rumbling of the cannon could be still heard, when a fainter report met their ears; and, as the view of the bay was extensive, they saw at a distance the dark hull of a vessel standing, with all sails set, for the man-of-war. The conflict, for the time, was ended; and, as before said, both parties stood gazing on the vessels. Merton saw at a glance, that the approaching sail was the Black Ship. He felt a pang of regret that he had volunteered to pass through the British lines. He had thus deprived himself of being one of the number to engage in the battle now pending. As he gazed he saw his ship fly up in the wind, and a wreath of smoke curl from her sides.

The Roebuck had ceased her firing after throwing her second shot; but now, as if aware of this new danger, and wishing to do all the damage he could to his enemy on hand, the British commander succeeded in obtaining a good range, and opened with all the guns he could bring to bear upon the Americans, strewing death and disorder in their ranks. Acting upon this signal, the foe again commenced the attack with such vigor, that, had not the watchful Merton prepared for the assault, his men would have been annihilated. Alas, for the success of the Americans. Their leader went down with a blow, dealt by a niggardly hand, and the Continental troops fled in confusion, leaving him wounded and a prisoner.

The battle of Long Island was fought, yet we can not say lost, although the enemy remained possessors of the field. The reader might tire, did we give a detailed account; yet, had we done so, it would have been seen how well planned and admirably executed were the maneuverings of the British. Every pass leading to Brooklyn the Americans had guarded, save one; by this unprotected point had the foe been enabled to decide the fortunes of the day, and turn the American flank. Had General Greene been able to command, this disaster would not have occurred; and the road from Jamaica to Bedford—which was the pass unguarded—would have been held by a force sufficient in number to have made the result a far different one. General Putnam, the wolf hero, and a warrior of the true stamp, was compelled to remain within his fortifications. All the assistance he could render the field forces was by sending small detachments to meet and check as much as possible the advance of the enemy. Lord Stirling had bravely contested the ground, inch by inch, with General Grant, until the frigate Roebuck had opened fire in his rear, upon the battery at Red Hook. Washington witnessed the disaster, and his great heart was wrung with anguish when word was brought that the American army was retreating. The violent rain on the twenty-eighth had kept both armies apart; but the following night the British broke ground, within easy range of Fort Greene, and the body of their army was coming up by slow but sure approaches.

On the morning of the thirtieth a British sentinel could have been seen lazily walking his beat, now and then glancing at the American lines, where a suspicious silence reigned.

"The Yankees must be asleep or dead," he at length remarked, "for I haven't heard a word from them this morning."

"Did you last night?" asked the one addressed.

"Yes; they made noise enough for a larger army than they have."

"Perhaps they have left," was remarked by another.

"Don't think they have," replied the first speaker, "for we're too sharp to let them out of the trap they're in."

"I don't know about that; but, to make sure, suppose three of us crawl up and take a look."

This proposition was agreed upon, and they accordingly cautiously advanced toward the American lines. The nearer they approached, the more they became convinced that no one was to be found. They crossed the well-worn pathway of the outer breastwork, but all was still. At last they ascended the fort, carefully peered over the wall; all was deserted—not even the smallest thing was left of any value.

"They've gone!" burst from their lips at once.

"But where?"

Out on the river, and beyond the range of their guns, could be seen the last barge load of the American forces. In a small boat which followed last, stood a tall figure, with folded arms, and a smile resting upon his countenance. He seemed the guardian spirit of the destinies of that army, and of his country. It was George Washington.

The alarm was spread, but it was too late, for the army of the Republic was safe. When Merton was stricken down, the Black Ship had arrived as near the frigate as her prudent commander judged safe. Her ports then flew open and a cutting fire with her heaviest guns greeted the somewhat surprised Briton. The British commander returned the compliment with iron hail, and extended sail after sail in pursuit of his daring foe. Captain Monmouth's instructions were not to allow his formidable antagonist to close in with him, but to lead him away, and thus draw the destructive fire which was being poured upon his friends on shore. This he succeeded in doing till, knowing that the issue of the battle must have been decided, he crowded on all the sail his ship could carry and made good his escape.

CHAPTER IX.

RONALD ON A SEARCH.

On a dark, stormy night, some months after the events narrated in the last chapter, a man was hastening along the streets of New York. He seemed not to mind the floods of rain that poured upon him. Wrapping his large cloak still closer around him, he hurried along, muttering his discontent in a low tone. The wind blew around the corners of the street in fitful gusts, rattling the window-shutters and causing the sign-boards to creak like the sad screeches of some wandering spirit. The street-lamps sent out a sickly, flickering glare of light across the drenched pavements, which only made the traveler's way more dreary. The distant splash and roar of the North and East rivers could be heard as their angry waters smote the shore.

The man kept on, now passing through the pitchy darkness of some lane or byway, or else threading a more open street, until he paused in front of what evidently was an inn or boarding-house, through the chinks of whose shutters streamed rays of cheerful light. Unhesitatingly he entered, without knocking. Groping his way along the dark entry, he opened a door to the right, and found himself within a well-lighted room. Remaining closely enveloped in his cloak until well satisfied none were present save the landlord and his son he removed his muffings, when the well-remembered face of Ronald was revealed.

"By all that's good, Ronald, where did you come from?" asked the astonished landlord in a strong north of England accent, shaking the hand of his friend heartily.

"Fae me hame—as I ca' it—over the river," he replied, returning the other's grasp.

"Bless my soul, man; but you must have something that won't brook delay to tempt you out such a night as this, and to cross an angry river at that!"

"It be a matter of gude or ill to one mon," he replied, adding, "but ha'e ye not a room where I can chat a while wi' ye, for it binna safe for me to be seen by mony nowadays?"

"Ay, that I have, and as it is a bleak and stormy night I would like a social bit of talk with you."

"It binna so much for my ainsell I ask it, as for the cause."

"Ah!" exclaimed the landlord, quickly. "Then you've struck out boudily since we last met, which is better than a twelve-month!"

"Ay ha'e I, as ye can see frae this," replied Ronald, opening his jacket and pointing to the letters worked on his bosom.

"Come along, old friend!" was the quick ejaculation, "for the man that wears the name of that ship about him finds a friend and helper in me, come what will."

Leading the way to a room situated in the most remote part of the house, he closed and securely fastened the door.

"Here we can speak out and no fears of being interrupted," he said, seating himself. "Now, what can I do for you?"

The seaman narrated the many adventures he had passed through up to the present time, and also the manner of his escape, also the loss of his commander.

"I ha'e been trying to cam' to New York for mony a long while, but ha'e not had a chance till noo."

"What brings you at this time?"

"At the battle o' Long Island my officer, Mr. Merton, was taken prisoner and brought here. I ha'e na heard aught o' him since then, and ha'e cam' now to seek him out."

"Let me see. What did you say his name was?"

"Harold Merton, who wa' first lieutenant o' the ship."

"Merton? Ah, now I remember. He was tried as a spy and condemned to be hung."

"Hung?" echoed the Scotchman, springing to his feet. "They ha'e not done it? If they ha'e, by a' that's gude in heaven or bad in hell, not a mon o'

them shall live to tell it lang, if I be buerally enough to strake a knife to his heart!"

"They haven't hung him yet," hastily replied his companion; "but it's said he will be in a week. They gave him but a short trial, for it seems there was a couple of officers who wanted him made away with at once. Their names, I think, were Moore and Walton—one a captain, the other a lieutenant."

"I ken them baith weel. But wa' there a young leddie wi' him that ye ken o'?"

"No, I never heard of one."

Ronald remained silent for a time; at length he said:

"I want ye to help me if you can to get Mr. Merton safe frae jail. I tell thee, mon, I binna sic a chap as would let him dee without gi'en a hand to save him if I can. Where be he?"

"I can't exactly tell you, Ronald; but, if I can do any thing to help you I will, right gladly. There's John can tell where he is imprisoned."

"Then gang at once and ask for the laddie, for be it far or near, I dinna care, I shall gang to it this night, and a burdly place it maun be that I canna make a hole through."

The landlord did as requested, and shortly returned with the information that the prison was but a short walk from his house near the river. This pleased Ronald well, and he began forthwith to make his preparations and lay his plans.

"Ken ye a Mr. Snowden, who came frae Georgia?" he asked.

"I think there's such a gentleman who lives in King George's street."

"Has he any leddies wi' him, or be he alone?"

"He has two that I know of; but there may be more."

"What may the twa be like?"

"They be mother and daughter I think, and they call the younger Clara."

"That be she!" exclaimed Ronald, with much apparent satisfaction. "Will you show me where she lives?"

"I'll send John; he knows the house better than I. Will that do?"

"I dinna care who gangs wi' me, so long as I get there and ha'e speech wi' her. I'll tell thee, mon, more on't, and then ye can judge for your ainsell. The Black Ship stopped at the coast o' Georgia for Mr. Merton to ha'e a chat wi' the bonnie lass—for they baith loved each ither weel—but when he came to the house, who should be there but twa British officers. Mr. Merton be na coward, but as tauld a mon as iver trod the deck o' a ship; and kenning there maun be hot words between them did they meet, he had C' away and myself, wi' a party o' the ship's men, gang wi' him. The chaps he bade lie hid till I piped a signal, while Conway and me went wi' him and stopped by the hall door. He had na bin gon' lang, when he gi'ed us a ca' and when we got in we saw that they wanted to make him a prisoner. The officer—Captain Moore—called in his men, but when I blew my whistle and the bonnie lads o' the ship cam' in frae doors and windows, he wa' laith to let us a' go free. The leddie cam' out wi' us, and I heard him ca' her Clara. I dinna think she kens he is to dee, else she wouldna be so still, and ye would ha'e heard something of it."

"You want to see her then, and together mean to plan some way of getting Mr. Merton free. Is that it?"

"Yes."

"I don't know how you will make out, but I'm inclined to think you're going to try more than you can manage."

"But canna ye help us?"

"No, I'm too well known. But draw up a little closer, and I'll tell you something. It isn't safe, in these times, to speak very loud, because you don't know at what moment you will be brought up, and walls, you know, are said to have ears."

Ronald did as requested, and the landlord continued:

"For a long time back, John has been in the service of the Colonies, and he's nothing more nor less than a spy. He's a large, unwieldy looking chap, and seems too innocent to do the king any harm; but if they take him for a fool, they'll find out their mistake before long, I'll warrant. Now, nothing would please him better than to take hold of this thing with you, and, if you think he'll be of any service, he shall go."

"Most sure I'll ha'e him gang, for twa hands are better than ane," he replied, as he rose from his seat.

"Then let's tell him, for if you intend seeing the young lady to-night, you haven't any time to lose;" and so saying they left the room.

As his father had rightly conjectured, John assented without hesitation, and, after whispering to his father, left the room. He had been gone some ten or fifteen minutes, when the door of the room leading to the hall opened, and a man entered. Seating himself with the familiarity of one completely at home, he rapped loudly on the table, without deigning so much as a glance at either Ronald or mine host. In stature he was short, yet largely made, and his dress bespoke him one of the original settlers of the city. His face was round, and of a good-natured expression, while its reddish hue attested to his fondness for beer.

"Vat for you don't comes, ven I raps so loud as I can, and pring me my pint of beer?" he hastily asked, while his voice had in its tone a sprinkling of anger.

"I beg your pardon," replied the landlord, hurrying to him. "What will you have?"

"I tinks you give me some like vat I had de udder night."

As the wished-for beverage was placed before

him, he raised it to his lips, and, after swallowing a little, set it down, and, drawing his sleeve across his mouth, accompanying the motion with a smack of his lips, asked, in a tone loud enough for Ronald to hear:

"Who's dat man, and vare he come from—eh?"

"He's an old friend of mine I have not seen for some years, and has just come from his ship."

"Will he take a little beer mid me? I likes to treat de friend of de king."

"I will ask him," was the reply.

"Do you ken him?" asked the cautious Scotchman, as the invitation was extended.

"Yes. He is an innocent sort of a fellow, although sometimes quarrelsome when drinking. You had better please him. His name is Peter."

"Weel, I dinna mind if I drink a pint o' ale wi' him," and he moved to where the Dutchman was, and seated himself opposite.

"Dat ish right," remarked Peter, grinning. "I dinks ish better for all to be friendly. Better if dish country had done so mid England, dan shpill so much blood fighting for nodding."

Ronald was on the point of denying this assertion, but recollecting how dangerous it was for him, in an enemy's city, to differ with the idea made popular either by circumstances or by force of arms, uttered some off-hand remark, and then wishing Peter a good health, emptied his cup at a draught. His entertainer followed his example, and turning, inquired of the landlord where his son was.

"He has stepped out, Peter, but will return soon," was the answer.

"If he binna in soon, I will gang wi'out him," remarked Ronald, impatiently.

"He is here, and has been waiting for you," replied the landlord.

"Where?"

"You have but just drank each other's healths. Peter and John are one and the same person."

"That are they," chimed the supposed Peter. "I only wanted to convince you, Ronald, how well I could play my part of the work you have laid out for yourself and me. There is a man, however, who is known in this town by almost every person, by the name of Dutch Pete, and as he is sick just now, I thought I'd take his place. I have chosen him because he's better known to the soldiers than any one else that I know of, and they think he is a simple, harmless sort of a fellow, and allow him to do pretty much as he pleases. Father has told you that I am one of Washington's spies. You see I'm an old hand at the business. I guess we'll get Mr. Merton out of prison without much trouble."

So completely was Ronald astonished at the metamorphosis the landlord's son had undergone, not only in apparel, but in voice and manner, that he seemed to forget the moments were gliding which were too precious to be wasted.

"Weel, I never saw sich a change in a' my life," he exclaimed, at length. "Ye binna na mare like Johnnie, than I be like a black man. Ye will do, laddie, and it be a canny one that will find ye out."

"I think so, too, Ronald, seeing your eyes nor ears didn't," replied the young man. "But we haven't any time to lose."

"Even sae, laddy; so let's be ganging, and we can talk this over afterhand."

"Have you left your boat so it can't be easily found?" inquired John.

"Yes."

"Have you any companions on the other side of the river?"

"No, laddie?"

"Does this Mr. Snowden know you?"

"Yes."

"Is he a friend of the Colonies, or of the king?"

"O' the king."

"Then it won't do for you to be seen. But come along: I'll fix some plan that will work out right in the end, never fear. If any one comes in, father, and asks for me, you can tell them I've got a headache, toothache, or whatever you will—you understand."

"Will you be back to-night, John?" asked his parent.

"I don't know how it will be; if I do, I'll give the signal."

They left the room, and commenced their walk. The storm still raging in all its fury caused them to hasten their footsteps. It required no great length of time to reach the end of their journey. Although Mr. Snowden resided in what was regarded as the suburbs, a few moments sufficed to bring them to his house.

"Shelter yourself under yonder stoop, Ronald, until I can enter the house and see how the land lays," said John. "Be careful that the patrol does not see you, should they pass. I'll let you know when they are wanted."

Without waiting for a reply, he advanced boldly up to the house. The door was opened to his summons by a domestic, who, as the light of the lamp shone on his face, exclaimed:

"Why, Peter, what takes you out such a night as this?"

"If you don't like to see me out, vy don't you say, 'Come in, Peter?'"

"Well, come in, Peter, and dry yourself," she said, closing the door, and leading the way into the kitchen.

"You want to know vy I ish out to-night?"

"Yes."

"I comes to see you, Mary," he said this in his most winning manner.

"You flatter me, Peter."

"No I doesn't, Mary; but I t'inks 'tish a bad night, raining like dunderation, and you wouldn't have any shweetheart; so I says, 'Let's go, Peter,' and I comes."

"I'm sorry you took so much trouble."

"Tish no troubles, only when I meets de soldiers, and dey stops me. Mary, dish ish bad times."

"Bad times! I should rather think they were. I wish the Americans would come back, and drive these saucy Britishers away," said the girl, sincerely.

This answer suited John exactly, as his remarks were made purposely to test the girl's feelings.

"And so doosh I, but it isn't safe for a man to say much about it, because he might be put in de prison. Ven I say prison, it makes me t'ink of dat poor young man dat's got to die next week."

"Who, P. ter?"

"I means Mr. Merton."

"I'll tell you what, then; if I was half a man, I would try and get him out, if I was lung for it the next minute, though I don't know him, and never heard his name before."

"Now, Mary, dat ish too hard," he replied, in a pitiful tone. "I don't know how to begin helping him, or, by dunderation, I would."

"You don't want a woman to tell you? For shame, Peter, for if you loved your country as well as I do, you would be fighting for her, and not be running about on wet nights seeing girls."

"You loves dish American country, den?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"And if you had de chance, would you do vat you could to help de cause?"

"Indeed I would."

"Well, young woman, I am not Peter," he said, speaking in his natural voice, "but am a spy from the government you love. Please make no noise, for I have come to see you on a matter of life and death, and you can help me."

"Speak quickly, sir," she said, with much agitation, "for anything I can do for you or poor America, I will."

"Then pay attention, and come closer to me, so I need not speak so loud. This young man, Mr. Merton, is Miss Bryce's husband as is to be; and, as I said, will be hung as a spy next week, unless we can save him. I want you to go and see her at once, and after telling her what I have said, mention that Ronald, of the Black Ship, and a companion, are in the house and want to see her this very night. You must not let her make any noise, or let any person see you. And now I want you to hide me till you come back."

"Never fear," said the quick-witted girl, "but I will manage it. I rather like t'is, for I am helping in a good work. Here, get under these clothes, and lay still till I come back."

He complied, and the next moment her footsteps died in the distance. Full half an hour was she gone, when, removing the coverings, she said:

"I have been longer than I meant to be, but Mr. Snowden had company from England, and it was some time before I could get an excuse to enter the room, and let Miss Clara know. Here she is, though, and, poor thing, frightened enough she is with the news."

"Good-morning, miss," he said, advancing toward her. "I bring you unpleasant news, but it's not as bad as it might be."

Question after question did the agitated girl ply him with, until he reminded her that Ronald was without. The faithful fellow was immediately summoned. As soon as he made his appearance, Mary acted as guard, while the best plan of operations was being determined. A rope of sufficient length and thickness was made by the expert fingers of the sailors, the requisite material being found in the clothes-line taken from Mary's basket. Then, with the promise that she should soon hear from them, they took their departure.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF PRISON, BUT INTO BONDS.

By this time it was well advanced toward midnight, but no thoughts were entertained of deferring their visit to the prison. Its location was in every way advantageous, and, although well guarded, the character which John could so easily adopt would carry him safely through, as Dutch Peter was often met with prowling around late at night.

"We're close on it, Ronald," at length remarked his companion, breaking the silence; "and, as I said, I know that Mr. Merton is in that stout building; but in what part of it I can't tell."

"Weel a weel," replied the Scotchman, discouragingly, "what ha'e we to do, then?"

"That's what I want to know," replied John. "You see it won't be hard for me to get among the guards, and I can make noise enough to wake up every prisoner in the place, but that won't do no good, as Mr. Merton won't know I want to find him out."

"Canna ye gang inside?"

"Nct I! If I was fifty times a Dutchman, they wouldn't allow that. Can't you think of something?"

"I might if I could gang wi' ye."

"But that you can't do. What would be your plan if you could?"

"I'd gie a whistle, like as they do on the ship."

"Tell me how it is done."

Ronald at once uttered a low sound, which John repeated until he perfectly understood. Then taking the rope from Ronald, and giving necessary caution, to the Scotchman's surprise, began retracing his steps.

"Weel," he muttered, as he hid himself in a deep doorway, "where be the man ganging to? Yonder be not the road to the prison. But he be a canny youth and kens well his business."

He had scarce finished speaking, when the tones of a voice fell on his ear, coming from no great distance, and, in a few moments a man came in view.

His step was unsteady, and, as far as Ronald could discern through the darkness, he had been drinking quite as much as he was able to bear. As he passed the seaman, he uttered a loud whistle, and, reeling toward him, said:

"Not quite so bad as I seem, Ronald. Stay where you are until you see me again," and then added, as he kept on; "Vel, it ish dark to-night as ish a (hic) lamp ven de room ish blowed out. By Shudas, I falls down (hic) several, many times, like I was drunk, till I ish all over mut. Dat ish a nice whistle, and I blows my head off learning, but I gets him py-and-py," and he broke forth again, as if his very life depended upon it.

"What are you kicking up such a row for, you drunken Dutchman?" called out one of the guard, as the supposed Peter came blundering along.

"Who ish drunk? Who makes a row?"

"You, you living sample of a beer-barrel," was the reply.

"You t'inks I gets mad mit you, but I doesn't," replied John, trying, with much exertion, to keep himself erect. "You t'inks I make the noise (hic), but it isn't me."

"Who is it, then?"

"Why de wind and rain, whistling around de corners."

"How come you out such a night? I can tell you what it is Mr. Peter, if you don't stop drinking, you won't be on top of the ground much longer. I've been on post here for a long time, ever since we fought the battle of Long Island, and it ain't been many nights that have passed without my seeing or hearing you. If I had my way, you would be somewhere besides running at large."

"Where'd I be?"

"Inside there, along with the ferocious chap that belongs to the Black Ship."

"De Black Ship? Vell, I doesn't know (hic) any t'ing about dat. If de man has a goot room, I doesn't fears him no more as te dyfil."

The soldier laughingly informed John that the Black Ship monster was confined in a room on the second floor of the north side of the building—a cold solitary place, where no light nor sound could reach him.

"Sol! Dat ish ba', to keep a fellow mitout not-tinks. I guess I doesn't want to shstay mit him. So I goes along," and the reeling drunkard started off into the darkness, whistling as if to keep up his courage.

"Well, go ahead, my jolly butter-tub, and take care you don't blow out what little brains you've got, by whistling too hard."

"I may blow to your sorrow," replied the counter-felt Dutchman, in an undertone, as he moved off.

Blundering and stumbling onward, in the deep ruts hat lined his path, he soon passed the patrol's beat, and then had no fear of encountering further interruption. Proceeding at a more rapid pace, he soon found himself in the rear of the building. It was a lonely spot. John selected a number of small stones, and commenced throwing them against the hard wall, hoping to strike the solitary iron grating which he knew would be in the building's side. For a long time he was thus engaged, until he began to despair of effecting the wished-for result. He was on the point of retracing his steps, when, as if in answer to his effort, a low whistle faintly reached his ear. It was the ship's signal! John answered it cautiously. It was a spirit telegraph which sent the blood bouncing through two hearts. Soon words were passed and all was arranged. From under his great Dutch doublet, John drew his coil of rope, and dextrously flung it up to the grating. After several efforts, Merton caught it, and soon a stout chisel passed up. Then, in as much silence as possible, Merton essayed the task of working out the iron bars. Hope of life, of liberty, gave strength to his arm. The bars, he found, were much weakened by rust. In the space of two hours, he had removed one and found the opening large enough to force his body through. To securely fasten the rope to the remaining grate, and descend to the ground, was but the work of a moment.

"May God bless you," he earnestly ejaculated, as he grasped the hand of his friend. "I do not know who you are, but you have rendered me a service which I shall never forget, and I am sure can never fully repay."

"Don't thank me too soon," replied John, "for we've got to pass the guards yet, and that prison may, before morning, contain two instead of one prisoner."

"I shall never go back alive," was the calm, yet firm reply. "The liberty I now once more enjoy shall never be surrendered only with my life."

"I'm glad to hear it, and you've a friend in me that will stand by you until I see you leave the city in safety. But let's be moving, for it's hard on morning. Take this pistol, but use it only to save life, and if you hear me use a different of speaking, don't show any surprise."

Without waiting for a reply his guide started forward, making all the haste the roughness of the ground, together with the darkness, would allow. They had not proceeded far when the sharp rattle of a musket, as it was brought to a charge, broke upon their ear, accompanied by the prompt challenge of the sentinel.

"Vel, it is me vot comes here, and how I comes ish hard telling," at once replied John, instantly assuming his borrowed character, without once reflecting how much injury he was entailing upon the real Peter.

"It's you, is it—you ghost of flesh and blood! And where have you come from this time of the morning?" inquired the soldier, not the same one John had passed on arriving.

"I comes from de prison where I goes some time ago, and falls down in de mud, so I lays still and goes to sleep."

"Fall down and go to sleep in the mud! You were drunk."

"I beesh a little tipsy and very shleepy."

"You were drunk, so don't lie to me."

"Who lies?" asked the supposed Peter, angrily, and going nearer the soldier.

"You do. But yonder is a man!" he exclaimed, as the figure of Merton loomed from out the darkness. "Dutchman, you have a hand in this. Who goes there? Halt! By Heavens, it is the—"

The remainder of the sentence was hushed by the heavy blow dealt by John, and catching the soldier's gun as it fell, he repeated the stroke with the breech, rendering him insensible.

"Come on, sir," he said, in a hurried whisper, as he caught Merton rudely by the arm and dragged him forward; "we have not a moment to lose, for see, yonder comes the relief."

He had rightly said, for remote only some three or four posts, the flash of a lantern shone through the darkness, and distant voices could be heard. As they passed where the faithful Ronald impatiently waited, he joined them, and simply pressing his superior's hand, the three made all speed to reach the inn.

"Now, Ronald, I want to know how you came here, and, in fact, the entire history of every event that has happened during my imprisonment," said Merton, seating himself in a comfortable chair in the landlord's secret room.

"Canna ye bide till morning?" inquired the Scotchman, for he felt his superior was much in need of rest.

"No, not a moment. Let me hear all now."

"It be a short story, sir," and forthwith he narrated the events of which the reader is already in possession, forgetting not to mention the interview he had with Clara.

The gray light of morning began slowly to steal through the leaden sky as the heroes of the night sought the repose that wearied nature craved. A few hours sufficed, and they again met within the room. The excitement in regard to the escape of Merton was intense, and a most diligent search was being instituted, as it was hoped that they had not yet been able to leave the city. So it was necessary for the greatest prudence to be used. The inn, fortunately, escaped visitation. It could not be expected that the affair would be likely to escape the attention of Mr. Snowden long; and that gentleman, fearing the bold lieutenant might attempt an interview with his ward, informed the British officers of the relations of the parties. A strong guard was established about his house. This was soon discovered by John, who at once made it known to the young man.

"So you think it would be best not to try and see Miss Bryce?" he asked, as his informant ceased speaking.

"I do, sir."

"Young man," he added, with his old resolution, "I shall use every effort to see that young lady. The plan we first adopted will be carried out, that is, if you are still willing to run the risk."

"I have engaged in a work that leads me nearer to the scaffold with every breath I draw. But as, in serving you, I serve my country, I will stand by you to the death."

"We're going to have the weather again in our favor, for it's going to be as dark as Egypt."

After partaking of a hasty supper, they emerged from the house, first ascertaining that they were unnoticed, and with extreme caution directed their steps toward Mr. Snowden's. Using the less frequented streets and alleys, they at length reached the rear of the building. It was evident that whatever instructions the guard had received, they were lax in carrying it out, for our party succeeded in scaling the wall of the garden without molestation. Cautioning the two to remain where they were, John advanced boldly to the house, and after a time his summons was answered by Mary.

"If you love your life, do not tarry one moment longer where you are," she hurriedly exclaimed, as she recognized the man.

"I'm certain I want to live, but for all that I can't take your advice," he replied, and then briefly explained why he was there, and what he wished her to do.

"I'm sure it can't be done, but I'll try. Stay where you are until I return, and should any of the guard happen this way, you must act for yourself."

"Which I shall," he quickly answered tapping the heavy sword he wore concealed beneath his ample cloak.

From the length of time she was gone, he feared she had found it difficult to communicate to Clara Merton's wishes. At length she reappeared.

"Tell the officer to go to the arbor on the right; the lady will soon be there," and she again entered the house.

"I like that girl," remarked the spy to himself; "she's made of the right mettle, and as soon as the war is over, if she hasn't any objections, I'll make—ahem! well, I'll wait till the war is over."

There is an old adage, and a true one, that to increase love you have but to keep from the object of your affection. This would seem to have been true with our lovers. Long had they been separated; it seemed years to Clara, and the happiness that gushed, like the sparkling waters of some mountain spring, from her pure heart, was only expressed by her rapturous silence. Merton knew that no time was to be lost in presenting to Clara the new hope he had allowed to spring into existence during the last twenty-four hours.

"My own Clara," he at length said, gently raising

her from his bosom, "you well know the fearful risk I run in visiting you, and yet I could not leave the city without seeing you. My first thought after making my escape was, where you were, and how I should find you. Had it not been for the assistance rendered me by the spy, I should have failed, and perhaps by this time have been again an inmate of my prison cell. But, dear Clara, I have something of vital importance to propose, which I hope for our mutual happiness you will think for the best."

"Tell me, dear Harold, what it is. You are now my guide, and with you rest all the hopes of my future life."

"I must leave this city at once, and hope to do so without interruption. God only knows when we shall meet again, perhaps never," he seemed choked as he uttered these last words, for his stout heart, that bore him so bravely in many a trying moment, gave way at the thought of parting with the fair girl by his side. He overcame his emotion in a moment, and resumed, in an impressive tone:

"What I propose may startle you by its abruptness, but it is that we part as man and wife."

"To be married!" she exclaimed, at this unlooked-for request.

"Does it surprise you?" he added, quickly. "The circumstances which surround us warrant it. Mr. Snowden will never give his sanction, were we to wait for the war to terminate, and surely you would only secure our peace of heart by being mine in life and in death."

"Then our marriage—?"

"Must be performed to-night."

"But the time! The—"

"Is as suitable as before a congregated throng in church, or in your uncle's splendid drawing-room. But it shall only be consummated with your mother's knowledge and consent."

Trembling with her commingled emotions of fear, love and doubt, the maid sought her mother's chamber, to startle the good lady by her revelations. For the moment, Mrs. Bryce was upon the point of giving a decided refusal, but as she reviewed Merton's history, she began to think more favorably. The pleasing, tearful countenance of her child sealed the decision.

"My child, he is worthy of you; let it be as he desires. I understand the motives that prompt him. Return and tell him he has my sanction, and that I will join him with all speed."

Clara hastened back to the side of her lover, and made known the result in blushing modesty. John was called, and to his surprise was asked where the services of a clergyman could be obtained. Considering a moment, he at length fixed upon one, who could be fully trusted. Giving a few orders, Merton bade him make all haste, and ere an hour had elapsed, the man had returned.

How solemn was that marriage! No pomp, no flashes of light, no merry voices, no display; but out in that black night air, with the wild, stormy sky above them, and the darkness around, Merton and Clara plighted their vows. The ceremony was soon concluded; a few moments later the heart-rending sobs of the young wife told that their parting was at hand. One moment of bliss to be followed by countless days of agony. The parting might be forever. The garden was again left to its solitude. The "careful watch" patrolled his beat, and as his "all well" rung out from time to time, Clara was informed within her solitary chamber that her husband had effected his escape unnoticed. Little did Mr. Snowden think, in his fancied security, as he rested on his couch in the library, of what was transpiring—that the "audacious rebel" had not only eluded his vigilance, but had assumed the right of controlling the future of his niece, with a power he could not gainsay.

We will not relate the manner in which Lieutenant Merton succeeded in passing the numerous guards posted around the premises and along the streets. It was owing to the management of the spy—a man of consummate courage, craft and devotion.

"And now we part," he said, as he grasped his hand, "both to engage in the dangers of our calling. You have saved my life and enabled me to consummate the dearest wish of my heart. One favor more I ask of you, if it should so happen that you are able to grant it. Watch over the welfare of my bride; guard her from ill; and should it be necessary, on account of any harsh treatment she may receive from her uncle, to have her removed, aid her to reach my vessel, and any reward you may ask shall be freely given."

"Do not speak of reward, sir, unless you want to aggravate me; and rest easy, that Mrs. Merton shall not want a friend as long as I am near. But push off, sir, for danger may come at any moment. Good-by to you both."

"Farewell, John; I shall not soon forget you. Here, receive this—nay, do not reject it," he said, drawing his watch from his pocket, and placing it within the hand of the spy. Then, as if fearful it would not be received, he ordered, quickly, "Give way, Ronald!"

The spy stood watching the boat until it was lost to sight, when, drawing a deep sigh of relief, and casting his eyes on the present, said: "Yes, I'll keep it, for we may never meet again."

His words were prophetic.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HAVEN AGAIN.

TIME, with steady hand, had tolled the requiem of many a year. The cloud of war no longer darkened the land. The warrior had laid aside his sword, for peace lay upon every hearthstone. America was

free, and had taken her place among nations, promising to become a great and mighty republic.

It was early spring-time. The first flowers began to open their beauties to the eye. The budding leaf, the warbling of birds, the fragrant air, gave promise of the intense joy which a bountiful Providence seemed to lavish upon all around.

The reader's attention is again invited to the headland near the River Medway. A distant speck of white can be seen far out on the blue waters of the ocean, but as the wind blows steadily landward, it gradually increases, until the gloomy hull and snowy sails of the Black Ship loom up from the horizon.

Harold Merton had not seen his bride since the night of his escape from New York. This was owing to Mr. Snowden's removing with his family to England, where he remained until the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. When he found that the estimate he had formed, in common with the majority of his countrymen, relating to the strength and ability of the Colonies to wage a successful war against a power so mighty in its resources as Great Britain, was erroneous, self-interest modified, if not entirely changed his hitherto loyal feelings, and he now soon returned to his Georgia estate, to enjoy the fruits of the liberty he had done nothing to merit.

The marriage of Clara had been kept a profound secret, and he had hinted that an alliance of herself with a gentleman whom he had already selected, would be exceedingly gratifying.

"So, Merton, we are likely so n to part," remarked Captain Monmouth, as his vessel dashed merrily through the water, toward the harbor in which she had once before rested.

"I hope it will not be long," replied the young man; for the idea of parting with his commander and the ship effected him nearly to tears.

"It may be forever, Merton," was the impressive reply. "You are soon to be united with your wife, and, in the cares of life, the memory of those with whom you have been associated will be forgotten," he added, after a moment's silence, with much feeling. "I once heard the prattling tongue of infancy call me 'father,' and felt the kiss of love upon my lips. But it was a brief bliss—alas, too suddenly ended!"

His lieutenant was astonished. From the first moment of their acquaintance not a word had been uttered which would lead him to believe this strange man ever had loved.

"You surprise me," he said, at length. "And with surprise comes the wish to learn more of your story. Your wife—did she die early?"

"Die—would to God she had! No, no, Merton; it was the work of those in whom I placed confidence; friends of the family they announced themselves, but I named them the plotting devils."

Merton was startled by the captain's manner; yet he could not refrain from adding:

"Your wife—your child—where are they?"

"Tis hard to say. Happy, perhaps, in other lands—at least so I hope."

"Have you not endeavored to find them?"

"Yes, but it was useless. I ventured once, and only once, to obtain an interview, but was told my guilt was too clear to admit of doubt, and that therefore my wife would not see me. Her special message was that for the future the greatest kindness I could show her would be never again to attempt an interview. I have obeyed that request; but, oh, how hard—God only knows how hard it has been to persevere in it."

"Captain Monmouth, excuse me, but I really think you have done yourself and your wife a great wrong, a life-long injury, in not compelling those who had wrought your unhappiness to a stern account."

"My dear boy, all this I did attempt, but 'twas useless. But no more of this," he added, his voice resuming its quick, authoritative tone. "Do you intend returning North with me, or will your stay be too long for me to wait?"

"My business is solely to see and claim my wife; and then, sir, I shall be ready to return."

"Then a day or two will suffice?"

"Quite."

"I must say I am by no means devoid of curiosity, and should much like to see this lady-love of yours."

"Will you not go with me to the house?—for I mean to make my second visit, as I did my first, unannounced."

"I will accept your invitation, and astonish myself by meeting society once more. By the by, Merton, we will poorly represent the navy of our country, seeing our clothes are none of the newest, and that no tailor sails aboard. But no matter; we will show marks of rough usage, like the old ship—God bless her!"

"She bears many a mark, sir; and her black sides look some less glossy than when she last glided among the dangers of yonder inlet."

"But, battered as she is, it would be a risky matter for a ship to try her strength; and, with all the plugs she carries, there is strength in her timbers yet. I suppose we must enter yonder harbor as we did at first, provided you and Ronald remember the signals?"

"Yes; it will be necessary, sir. I still remember my part of the lesson."

"Ronald?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

The faithful Scotchman came aft.

"Do you remember the part you played on this shore, while we obeyed your signals aboard ship?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think you can go through the same thing again?"

"I ken so."

"Then get you a crew, and lower away the boat."
 "Ha'e you the flags, Mr. Merton?"
 "They are in the cabin, Ronald; and while you get ready I will bring them."
 "Beg pardon, sir; but be ye ganging to see the leddie?"

"Yes, Ronald, such is my intention."
 "I wad like to gang wi' ye, sir, for there be na knowing what might happen. Ye dinna forget the service poor Jamie and mysel' gied ye, when ye had us gang wi' ye?"

"I remember it well, Ronald; but I think this time we will not be likely to meet enemies. You may go, however, so lose no time in preparing the boat, my man," added Merton.

"Ay, ay, sir;" and the happy fellow hastened to perform his duties.

Conway was no longer the Scotchman's inseparable companion. The noble sailor had yie'ded up his life in the service of his adopted country, and now lay calmly sleeping beneath the ever-moving waters. Oft had his companion thought, as he passed through the lone hours of his watch, of his friend Jamie's last words. He could almost hear the stentorian tones of his voice, as, side by side they fought, until missing the strength of his brawny arm, he turned and saw the brave man lying prostrate on the deck, his life flowing fast away.

"It's all up with me at last, Ronald boy, and you'll have to fight alone the balance of your days. Take a dying man's blessing, and stand by the flag, Ronald, if you have to give up your life as I have. God bless you, Ronald, for you've been a brother to me. Raise me up higher, for I want to see the battle. By me faith, but the strife's ours, boy. Oh! for a little more life—a wee bit of strength—but it's coming—good-b—"

Ronald was companionless!

The boat was ready. Merton having examined the signals, the crew started for the shore. The little flags did their work well, and the Black Ship soon swung at her cable. Captain Monmouth, with his lieutenant, started at once for the mansion of Mr. Snowden.

CHAPTER XII.

ALL IS WELL.

"Oh, mother, when will this cruel separation end? When shall I again behold the dear form and face of that husband who has been kept so long from me?" said the now despairing Clara to her mother, on that delicious spring day.

"Patience, my daughter. In God's good time all will be well, and the clouds which so weigh down your spirits will surely pass away. Trust in Him who doeth all things well. But come, you must rouse yourself, and not let the company assembled below see you wear such a look of despondency. Have you arranged every thing for the tableau?"

"Yes, mother, but really I detest the folly."

"You will find that it will do much toward chasing away the sadness that seems to depress your spirits to an unusual degree to-day, my child."

"I will try, mother. Do you descend; I shall soon make my appearance."

"Harold, my Harold," she murmured, when left to herself again. "Oh, why do you stay away from me? When shall we be reunited, never more to part?"

She seated herself by the window, gazing abstractedly out upon the sunny landscape. Long she lingered, forgetful of the promise she had made, until roused by the joyous tones of the company below.

She hastened through her toilet. Arranging her abundant tresses gracefully around her brow, and robing herself in a simple yet becoming dress, she descended to the parlor, to mingle with the guests, and to appear the gayest of the gay.

Mr. Snowden was celebrating the anniversary of his birthday—a custom which he never omitted. And now that the war had ended, and peace again blest his estate with fruitfulness, the master of the mansion enjoyed the festivities of the day with unwonted relish.

The hours passed swiftly. The shades of night stole over all. It was planned that in the evening a grand tableau should be enacted, representing some of the leading events of the past struggle. Ella was to appear as Liberty, surrounded by her satellites, while her mother intended portraying some of the sorrows attending war. She was to personate the widow robbed of her husband on the battle-field, and was to be seen in the act of gazing on his picture, and to appear as if bowed down with anguish. The trials of her own life enabled her to act her part with much more real feeling than the assembled company could guess.

When Captain Monmouth and Harold reached the mansion, it was quite dark. The first sound which met their ears was the sound of music and merry voices, causing them both to look inquiringly at each other.

"You will be obliged to delay your visit, for there must be a large company gathered in there, Merton."

"None, I think, sir, have a better right of entering than myself. With your permission, we will walk in," replied the young man, determinedly.

"Very well, lead on," replied his commander. "I know how it is with you young husbands, and I do not blame your anxiety in wanting to see your long-absent wife."

They approached the door, and knocked for admittance. It was some time before the summons was answered.

"I would like to see Mrs.—I mean Miss Bryce," said Merton, to the servant.

"Yes, sar—walk in, sir. Miss Clara be in de parlor, and can't come right away."

"But I must see her at once."

"Beg pardon, sar, but she's playing in de show jest now."

"What does all this mean?" said Merton, looking puzzled.

"De ladies and gemmen am all dressed up and playing like as if dey was dead," exclaimed the darky.

"The man evidently means they are engaged in a play of some kind," suggested the captain.

"Ah, true. You can go, boy, and we will wait in the ante-room," said Merton, as the negro hastened away to witness the tableau.

"It is many a long year, Merton, since the music of the social circle has rung in my ears," said the captain, breaking the silence, and glancing around the comfortable room in which they were seated. "Moments like these make me sad, and awake fresh memories of bygone days, which, for the sake of my peace of mind, were better never recalled."

"Our natures, sir, flow in very different channels," replied Merton, as he noticed the melancholy which spread over the countenance of his superior.

"With me, sir, did aught trouble my peace of mind, I should make a confidant of some generous heart, that would sympathize with and comfort me, while you keep your secret most jealously locked within your own breast. Captain Monmouth, unsuitable as the time and place is, will you not unburden your heart to me?"

"God bless you, my young friend! I appreciate the motive that prompts the desire on your part, but you cannot aid me and the recital of my wrongs would neither be pleasant for me to relate, nor for you to hear. All will be made right in the world beyond this."

He arose, and hurriedly paced to and fro, across the little room. Merton watched him for some time, wondering what could have been the cause which created so much unhappiness in the heart of the agitated man before him. Gradually his thoughts turned to his beloved, whom he was so soon to clasp to his yearning heart, and proudly publish to the world the tie that bound them. Moments swiftly flew, until he was aroused from his reverie by the startling yet suppressed cry of his superior. He saw him totter to a chair. From the apartment in which they were seated led two doors. One, by which they had entered, and another opening into a passage which led to the drawing-room, where the company were assembled. Directly in front of the door, which stood open, was erected a platform, upon which the different scenes were being represented. It was evident Captain Monmouth had remarked something which disturbed him, for he hurried to Merton's side, saying:

"Look through yonder door, and tell me what you see!" His voice was reduced to a hoarse whisper.

"A room well thronged with visitors, that is all," answered Merton.

"But the platform! Look on the platform!"

"There is no one there."

"Oh, Merton, why did you bring me here? Would to God I was out on the wide ocean. Would that I could feel the quiver of my noble ship beneath my feet, and hear the fierce unchained winds whirling and whipping the waters into mountain waves. This is a new chapter in my life's history, and it will either bequeath to me joy, or a still darker path to tread. Come, follow me."

"Where, sir, are you going?" asked Merton, in much agitation.

"Among yonder company, and to introduce a tableau *true to the life*."

"But your agitation—your abrupt entrance—your—"

"Well, your what? Think you I care for *opinion*, or intend molding my actions to suit the present assembly?" He said this sternly, and advanced toward the passage. "Come, Merton, and see the end of this."

The two entered the parlor apparently unnoticed, and seated themselves where they would be likely to attract the least attention. Merton glanced hurriedly around the room in quest of her he longed to see, but he looked in vain. He then turned his attention to his superior.

"What was it, sir, that caused your agitation?" asked the young man, in a whisper.

"Be silent, and you will soon know all."

"What is the next piece called?" Merton heard a lady near him inquire.

"The Widow," was the answer. "Mrs. Bryce is the actress. It will, no doubt, be well represented."

The sound of a bell was heard at this moment, suppressing at once the hum of voices. All eyes were directed to see what the withdrawing of the gracefully draped curtain would reveal.

Seated on a velvet-covered chair, her head resting on her hand, with eyes fixed on a miniature likeness she held, was Mrs. Bryce. Her hair was plainly yet beautifully arranged, and her dress of deep black sat handsomely to her yet well-rounded figure. Age had lightly touched her with his frosty hand. The soft light thrown upon the stage by the well-adjusted lamps, made the picture, in all respects, one of startling effect and beauty. It portrayed one of the wives of America, who had encouraged her husband to go forth and battle in the cause of truth and justice, and, while obeying her mandate, death had stricken him down, and she was now left to struggle companionless through life's journey! So well did she act her part, that not the slightest motion was visible, and, although the tableau embraced but the single figure, it was the most striking one of the evening. Her attitude was changed by the touch of the bell, and slowly sinking to a kneeling position, she assumed the attitude of prayer, as if asking God to

take her to himself and to the lost one. For the first time her features could be plainly seen. What causes that upheaving of the breast, the quiver of the lips—ay, even a tear glistening in her eye? A chord is touched whose vibration stirs her entire being. Back through the stages of her life's pilgrimage, now darkened by time and almost forgotten, shines a faint light, revealing the memories of happier days. She struggles to be calm, to choke back the overflowing torrents of a soul overburdened with its memories, and, though successful, it taxed her resolution to the utmost. Those who gazed could not applaud. The scene was too truthful to be disturbed by clapping of hands or the utterance of applause. A silence undisturbed by the slightest sound filled the room. The bell was, at length, touched, for those who were in charge had neglected their duty, so interested were they in gazing upon this truly painful picture. Suddenly, a voice, deep and hollow in its tone, startled those present:

"Let the curtain remain! The end of the act is not yet!"

The company was startled to behold the commanding form of a stranger leap upon the stage before the still kneeling woman.

"Am I forgotten, Ella?"

His answer was the fixed, painful gaze of those eyes that had so oft looked on him in love.

"Ella, am I forgotten?" he continued. "Have the long years crushed from your heart the love you once bore me? Oh, look on me in kindness, if but for a moment. Remember our child! Living or dead, remember that I am her father! Still silent? Then farewell! A long, eternal farewell!"

He turned to go.

A wild shriek was his answer, as the form of the woman fell prostrate before him.

All was instant confusion. The guests gathered around the fainting lady to proffer assistance, but Monmouth waved them back, saying, as he raised the inanimate form in his arms:

"Back—give her air!" The company fell back at his stern command.

The astonishment of Merton, meanwhile, was such as to banish all thoughts of self, or the lovely being he called wife. Even when the excitement was intense, and all had rushed to assist the fainting lady, he remained rooted to the spot, nor did he stir until Mrs. Bryce had been removed to her room. Silence being then restored, the explanations offered by his superior recalled him to the time and place.

"My friends," the captain began, "I regret that my presence has caused the entertainments of this evening to be so suddenly interrupted. Let me inform you that I am Charles Monmouth, commander of the Black Ship, whose exploits doubtless have filled the heart of every American with pride, and struck terror to the seamen of England. Yonder stands one of whom his country is proud, and should be named in connection with myself—Lieutenant Harold Merton, to whose courage and wisdom the Black Ship owes much of her glory."

The astonished company pressed eagerly forward to grasp the hand of the man whose name they had so often heard. After expressing words of congratulation, they turned to seek Merton, but looked in vain. The quick ear of love had heard the light footfall, and the young man was folded in the embrace of his wife. They stood in rapt silence before that assembly. Merton at length broke the spell by saying, as he disengaged the arms from his neck and lifted the radiant face of Clara from his bosom:

"Ladies and gentlemen—my wife—Mrs. Merton."

"Mr. Snowden was silent from astonishment. "His wife!" He muttered the words over and over again, after he had collected his thoughts. And then the reappearance of the husband of his sister! Surely it seemed a night of evil omen to him. He passed out of the room unobserved. The evening was far advanced, and much as both the officers were inclined to remain, the stern discipline of the service denied them permission. Promising to return the ensuing morning, they took their departure, and with buoyant feelings proceeded to their vessel.

In the morning we again find the two officers on their return to the mansion of Mr. Snowden. The manner of Captain Monmouth was calm and austere.

"Why are you so gloomy this morning?" at length asked Merton. "Surely, sir, you have the hope that the mistake of years is to be rectified, and the anticipation that the remainder of your life will be bright and happy should make you joyous."

"Very true," replied his superior. "Yet the mood has so attached itself to me that it cannot be removed at once. I have cause for at least a momentary joy."

"I feel that it is to be a joy forever, sir! And to think that I am really linked to you by ties of relationship is very sweet!"

Merton's face fully expressed the pleasure filling his whole soul.

The captain grasped his hand, and as he said "God bless you!" the tears coursed down his cheek unrestrainedly.

The two walked in silence to the mansion. Evidently they were expected guests. Mr. Snowden received them with a gentlemanly cordiality, though his anxious face expressed the mistrust and disappointment in his heart.

The captain at once sought the side of Mrs. Bryce. She gave him her hand, and looking him full in the face, said:

"I thank God that you have come back to me!"

The stern seaman could only say, "My wife!" as he drew her to his bosom.

Clara and Merton witnessed all, and, even in their moment of surpassing bliss, had hearts of thankful-

ness for the return and restoration in love of the long-lost father.

Ere long the company regained their seats, when Captain Monmouth at once proceeded to relate his story, and thus to relieve his soul of its long-worn burden.

"In detailing the causes which have so long estranged me from her whom I never wronged, I wish to blame no person of this present company. I must admit that had you, Mr. Snowden, allowed me a hearing, or you, my dear wife, been not so persuaded by those who partly wished me harm, and partly felt, for a time, so exasperated that they would not even allow me the opportunity of clearing myself from the false charges preferred against me, much misery would have been spared us both. The charges that were advanced, and which you all believed, were these: First, in regard to the will which left my wife one-half of the property of your only brother, Mr. Snowden, it was said that the codicil had been removed, and that I did it. The reason assigned was that the will proper did not mention any proviso, while the codicil directed that the property must not be made over by her to her husband but be left to her children. The second charge was that I had been from the beginning a worthless fellow, well versed in gambling, and, in fact, in all the evil ways of dissolute men, but possessed of cunning enough to keep them concealed from the knowledge of her I loved. Circumstances favored the miserable wretches who had devised the scheme to ruin me and shipwreck my happiness. Will it be necessary for me to minutely detail all that transpired, or are circumstances sufficiently fresh to dispense with words? I hope so."

"Be brief, dear husband, for the subject is trying enough even to think of, much less to be the theme of conversation," replied his wife, looking up through tears, pleadingly into his face.

"As to the will, I learn that you have long since been convinced of my innocence, for, although from that evil day having never seen you, I have learned from others that such was the case. You are satisfied of that fact, Mr. Snowden?"

"Fully, sir."

"The remaining charge still hangs clouded in mystery, for the truth has never been revealed. The reason that I was so charged in both cases, was owing to a man by the name of Tripton, who had loved your sister at the same time as myself, and he it was who originated the story of the will, which by some means he discovered. To further his aims, he hired a man capable of any act, and he was the dissipated gambler. Between this man and myself there existed a most remarkable likeness, and this Tripton turned it to advantage, for, while it screened him, it enabled the story of my ill-doings to seem true. The plan he adopted was, that by repeated visits, and demonstrations of the most disinterested friendship, he at last spoke of me, and in such a manner as to indicate that the duty was painful. To prove what he said, he offered to convince Mr. Snowden and others by the best of evidence, namely, sight, and always chose the time when business either called me away from the city, or compelled me to remain out late. I need hardly add that the person seen, represented as myself, was his accomplice. I remained perfectly ignorant of all this until, like the sudden burst of the tempest, my wife was torn from me, and I even refused the chance of proving my innocence. The proofs of my guilt it was said were unquestionable, and they did not wish me to increase my crimes by perjury. There was a sprinkling of censoriousness in his voice as he uttered these words. After a short pause he added: "But enough. This paper, procured by me from his accomplice before he died, will show in a moment my innocence."

Receiving the paper presented, Mr. Snowden read it attentively. As he handed it to his sister, he rose, and taking the captain's hand, said, warmly:

"You will, I hope, not judge harshly of me for causing you so many days of sorrow. You must see that the proofs seemed almost unquestionable. Pardon me, my dear sir, and believe that I will make all the restitution within my power."

"All that I require is to have you feel that I am not the kind of man you have so long been led to believe. In the future, may a friendship without suspicion exist between us."

"It shall be no fault of mine if such is not the case; so let us drop the subject, burying it deep with the unpleasant moments of the past, and live for love and contentment in the days to come. To you, also, Lieutenant Merton, I will say a word before this painful conference is forever ended," he added, turning with a pleasant smile to the young man. "In the warmth of my love of country I treated you with the harshness, which I sincerely regret, and ask forgiveness. You married Clara with no pomp, and under extremely gloomy auspices, both as regards the time and the then lamentable state of the country. I now propose that we speak on these matters no more, but enter upon this new era of our lives, by inviting our friends again, and let the tableau represent, not the sorrowing widow, but the more joyous one, of the reunion of lives and loves."

It was with more difficulty than was expected, that Captain Monmouth and Lieutenant Merton succeeded in resigning the command of their vessel. The country to which they had rendered such valuable service was loth to lose them, and it was at last granted, by their promising to again give their aid in case it was needed. The parting with the crew was a most affecting and trying scene. Those men, who had met with unshrinking hearts the dangers of battle, or braved the fury of the tempest, wept great tears as they grasped the hands of their officers and bade them farewell. Ronald insisted up-

on attending Merton, and two years remained on land. The change, however, was too monotonous, and he returned on shipboard, making annual visits to those whom he had aided in making happy.

Time rolled steadily on, each day bringing with it an increase of happiness to the characters of our story. The roof that covered one covered all. They had settled on the plantation of Mr. Snowden, as the health of both mother and daughter required the balmy breezes of a southern clime.

"So, Ronald, you have at length determined to leave the ocean, and spend the remainder of your days with us?" queried Clara, one evening in early spring, as they were gathered in the parlor.

"Ay, my leddie," replied the sailor. "I ha'e enouch o' salt water."

"Indeed you have, Ronald, and I do but speak for all when I say that your home with us shall be made all you desire."

"I ken it weel, my leddie, and I shall ha'e mony a merry hour, telling the bonnie bairns o' the brave deeds their fathers did when he and I cruised the seas in THE BLACK SHIP."

THE END.

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